

a guest room, for I trust that through your prayers I will be restored to you.
23 ¶ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,

24 *as well as* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.
25 ¶ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit.

ment of A.D. 61-63, then it is possible that after his release he revisited the area of Asia Minor (See comments At 28:31). Paul here shows great confidence that God will answer the prayers of the saints, and thus, requests that Philemon prepare a place for him to stay. **23,24** Epaphras was possibly an evangelist who worked in the area of Colosse and had journeyed to Rome on behalf of the church (Cl 1:7; 4:10-13). Paul refers to him as a fellow prisoner. Reference could possibly be in the spiritual sense that he was a prisoner in the service of the Lord (See Cl 4:10). However, it was not uncommon for

evangelists in these times, and especially the decades to come, to be imprisoned for their preaching of the gospel. Paul also mentions the following fellow evangelists who were with him: **Mark** (At 12:12,25; 15:27-39; Cl 4:10; see "Author" in the introduction to At), **Aristarchus** (At 19:29; 27:2; Cl 4:10), **Demas** (Cl 4:14; 2 Tm 4:10), and **Luke** (2 Tm 4:11; see "Author" in introduction to Lk). **25 Grace:** See Gl 6:18; Ph 4:23; 2 Tm 4:22. In this closing of his letter to Philemon, Paul calls on the favor of Jesus upon the entire being of Philemon. It is Paul's prayer that Jesus show special favor on the godly man.

The Letter To The Hebrews

Author

Because the Spirit-inspired author does not identify himself, it is difficult to determine who actually wrote this letter. Most Bible students tend to agree that Paul wrote the book. However, Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Silas and others have also been suggested as possible authors. There are several reasons why it is affirmed that Paul wrote Hebrews. (1) The literary style and contents of the book reflect both the style of writing and subjects that Paul usually deals with in his writings. (2) The early church writers as Eusebius and Origen affirm that Paul wrote Hebrews. (3) The author was a close friend of Timothy (See comments 13:23). (4) The closing comments of chapter 13 are similar to comments that Paul uses in those letters where he identifies himself as the writer. Though these points give evidence to Paul as the author of the letter, there is no clear evidence that he was actually the author. Therefore, it is best to leave our speculations as just that and affirm that it was the desire of the Holy Spirit not to inform us concerning the human hand that wrote this letter.

Date

The oldest New Testament manuscripts entitle this letter "Hebrews." The readers are of Jewish heritage because of the great emphasis in the letter on the Old Testament law. The recipients were formerly Jewish in religion who had been converted to Christ. Therefore, the date for writing would have been somewhere in the latter 60s since the recipients had been disciples for some time.

There is a great emphasis in the book on the subject of the temple and the Old Testament law (9:6-10; 12:27; 13:10). In view of the fact that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in A.D. 70, we could suppose that the letter was written sometime before A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24).

Those to whom the letter was directed had been Christians for some time (See 2:1-4; 5:12). By the time the letter was written, they had endured the initial persecution that was led by those still in the bondage of Judaism (10:32-34; see comments of Gl). Therefore, if the book were written by Paul, it would possibly have been written anywhere from the middle of the 50s to A.D. 64 or 65 (See comments 13:23). If it were written by someone else, it could have been written in the 60s, but prior to A.D. 68. Because the recipients were under great pressure to return to Judaism, we would conclude that the letter was written during the time when national Israel was seeking to throw off Roman occupation of Palestine. The tension of these efforts occurred in the 60s, and thus we would assign the date of writing to the 60s.

Theme

The writer affirms the superiority of the new covenant over the old because of the better priesthood of Jesus. For this reason our salvation is by faith in Christ as opposed to trusting in the sacrifices of the Old Testament law (See ch 11).

Purpose

It seems that the Jewish Christians to whom the letter was directed were on the verge of returning to the Old Testament law. The reason they may have been on the verge of apostasy was because of either persecution by the Jews of the society in which they lived or through the infiltration of Judaism into the church. In concluding the letter, the writer pleaded, “*And I urge to you, brethren, bear this word of exhortation ...*” (13:22). The Hebrew writer wrote to convince these disciples that the Old Testament law and its shadows were given in order to bring Israel to the priesthood of Jesus and the new covenant (See 10:1-10). Now that the new priesthood has come in Jesus and the new covenant, then the old has been taken away (10:9,10). The writer’s argument, therefore, is to manifest the supremacy (1) of Christ (chs 1,2), (2) of the better hope of Christians in heaven (3:1 - 4:13), (3) of the high priesthood of Jesus (4:14 - 7:28), and (4) of the better covenant and sacrifice of Jesus (8:1 - 10:18). He concludes the book by exhorting his readers to respond to the high priesthood of Jesus by persevering in the faith through obedience of God’s will (10:19 - 13:25).

Chapter 1

1 ¶ God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all

things, by whom also He made the universe.
3 And He is the brightness of *His* glory and the exact image of His nature, upholding all things by the word of His power. When He had by Himself purified our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Chapter 1

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH JESUS

On the background of some possible reverence of angels in the theology of those to whom he wrote, the Hebrew writer in this chapter first proposes the superiority of Jesus over angels. He begins his argument of upholding Christianity over Judaism by affirming that God has now spoken to us through His Son whom He has appointed over all things.

1,2 In time past: Throughout the work of God in the time of the Old Testament, God communicated to man through different means of revelation. He spoke through dreams, visions, supernatural happenings and written words of inspiration (See Gn 40:8; 41:16; Ex 19:19; Nm 12:6-8; Dn 2:19-23). The will of God was thus revealed a portion at a time throughout history. On the other hand, God has in these last days communicated through Christ the totality of the revelation He has for man (2 Pt 1:3; see comments 2 Tm 3:16,17). **By the prophets:** A prophet is defined as one through whom God has communicated His will. Throughout the era of human history that is recorded by the Old Testament, God spoke through chosen men called prophets. **In these last days:** All revelation of God previous to the coming of Jesus was in preparation for the revelation through Jesus (See Jn 1:17). Therefore, in this last dispensation of God’s work among men in this present world, God has communicated through Jesus (Compare 9:26; At 2:17; 1 Co 10:11; 1 Pt 1:20). These are thus the last times in which God will work among men in this present world. Those of this world who would seek God, therefore, must seek Him through Jesus. He is the only way to the Father (Jn 14:6). He is the only means by which men can be saved (At 4:12). When Jesus comes again, this world will be changed according to verse 12. In this change, however, this present world will be destroyed (See 1 Co 15:24-28; 1 Th 4:13-18; 2 Pt 3:10-13). **Heir of all things:** Jesus is the legal heir who has

been designated by the Father to inherit all things (See Ps 2:8; compare Mk 12:6,7; Lk 20:13,14; Jn 16:15). In other words, because of who He is, Jesus has been given all things (See Mt 28:18; Jn 13:2; 17:3; Ep 1:20-22). **He made the universe:** The word “universe” comes from the Greek word *aiones*, that is, “ages.” God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked through God the Son to create the ages. This would certainly include the world of beings, physical and spiritual, as well as the physical world (See comments Cl 1:16; see Gn 1:26; Jn 1:3; 1 Co 8:6). However, the word *aiones* designates ages. The thought here could be that the Son created more than the visible and invisible beings of the world that now exists. The Son certainly created all these things. However, He also established the timetable of dispensations by which the scheme of redemption would be carried out. **3 Image of His nature:** Through the created physical worlds we can understand that God exists and that He is powerful (Rm 1:20). However, we could never have known the nature and character of God without the incarnation of God through Jesus. Jesus reflects or radiates the glory, character and attributes of the God who created all things (Jn 1:14). He is thus the incarnation of the character of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See Jn 14:9; 2 Co 4:4; Cl 1:15). **Upholding all things:** The writer begins the exaltation of Jesus by proclaiming His power. It is through His omnipotent word that the universe is held together (See Jn 1:4; Cl 1:15-17; Rv 4:1-11). The order of all things is continued because He continues in His all-powerful position at the right hand of God. **Purged our sins:** Through the sacrificial offering of the cross, Jesus made atonement for our sins (7:27; 1 Pt 2:21-24). The purging of sin was “by Himself,” and thus, the atonement was His personal work through His incarnation and death. No man can take credit for what Jesus accomplished through the cross. **At the right hand:** The phrase “right hand of God” is used throughout Hebrews. It is used because of the significance of the phrase as it was used by the an-

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 ¶ For to which of the angels did He ever say, “*You are My Son, this day I have begotten You?*” And again, “*I will be to Him a Father and He will be to Me a Son?*”

6 And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “*And let all the angels of God worship Him.*”

7 And of the angels He says, “*He makes His*

angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.”

8 But of the Son *He* says, “*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.*

9 *You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore, God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions.*”

10 And, “*You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens*

cients. Reference was to a position of power and authority that was invested in one who was at the right hand of a ruling king. Emphasis in Scripture in reference to Deity is not to location. We are not to think that Jesus is located somewhere in a position that is literally at the right hand of God. The phrase is used metaphorically in Scripture in reference to God. Therefore, Jesus is in a position of authority. No angel has ever assumed the position of authority at the right hand of God. Only Jesus can be there (8:1; Ps 110:1; Ep 1:20-22). **4 Better than the angels:** While He was on earth, Jesus emptied Himself, and thus, was a little lower than the angels (2:6,7; Ph 2:5-8). However, as the Son of God and heir of all things, He ascended to the position of authority over all things (Ph 2:9,20). He is thus superior to angels. We would assume that the ones to whom the writer addresses these words are not considering the preexistent state of the Son of God before the incarnation. Jesus as the Word existed in the beginning with God, for He was God (Jn 1:1,2). Only in His incarnation did He become lower than the angels. He is now God over all things (2:5-9). His incarnation was only a passing state of being in eternity during which He accomplished the scheme of redemption.

SUPERIORITY OF JESUS OVER ANGELS

5 Since the Old Testament law was given through angels (At 2:2; At 7:53; Gl 3:19), the Jewish fathers gave much honor to angels. This honor evidently developed into a theology in the first century where some sects of Judaism possibly gave worship to angels (See Cl 2:18). When Jesus came, therefore, it would have been tempting to place Jesus on the level of angels by Jews who became Christians. This would have diminished the appeal of Jesus and the new covenant in reference to the Old Testament law and covenant. However, if we maintain the nature of argument of the entire letter, it would appear that the writer is using the Jews' respect for angels as his first point of argument not to return to the system of religion from which they came. They came out of Judaism, which religion gave too much respect to angels. They must not return to the religion from which they were delivered because Jesus is greater than angels. **To which of the angels:** The contrast between Jesus and angels begins here by asking a question in reference to quotations from Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14. The Father never referred to angels as “My Son.” **I have begotten You:** The word “begotten” is here used metaphorically in the sense that through the incarnation Jesus was brought forth into the world. It is not that

Jesus was created. He originated from the Father. Neither was His existence started by the physical birth from Mary. Jesus, the Son of God, existed before the infant Jesus was born in Bethlehem. **Be to Him a Father:** When Jesus was born into the world, then God the Son became Jesus the Messiah. At the time of the birth of Jesus, therefore, the Father-Son relationship began. It began by Jesus' incarnation into the flesh of man (See comments Jn 1:14; Ph 2:6-8). In this sense, therefore, Jesus was begotten into the world by the Father through the virgin birth of Mary. **A Son:** Angels were never referred to individually as sons of God. However, they have been referred to as a group as sons in that they were created by God (Jb 1:6; 2:1; see Cl 1:16). On the other hand, Jesus is the only begotten Son through incarnation into this world (Jn 3:16). Therefore, the fact that Jesus is the only begotten Son argues that He is greater than angels. **6 Worship Him:** Worship is to be directed only to God. Since the writer here affirms that Jesus is to be worshiped, even by the angels, he affirms that the Son is God (See 1 Pt 3:22; Rv 5:11-13). In the Septuagint translation of Dt 32:43, from which the quotation is here taken, the passage refers to God (Compare Ps 97:7). In applying Dt 32:43 to Jesus, the Hebrew writer is again exalting Jesus to Deity, and thus, deserving of the worship of even angels. He is the “firstborn” of God into the world, and thus, to be worshiped as God (See Rm 8:29; Cl 1:15,18; Rv 1:5). **7 Angels:** See Ps 104:4. Though the angels are spirits, we must not assume that they were superior to Jesus, even in His incarnate state. At least during His ministry, Jesus had authority over all things (See Jn 13:3; 17:2; Mt 28:18). **His ministers:** God controls the angels according to His will. Their being, position and existence is under the control of God (See comments Jd 6; 2 Pt 2:4). On the other hand, Jesus is in control of all things. The angels are servants, but the Son is the master of all (See Jn 1:1; 20:28; Rm 9:5; Cl 2:9; Ti 2:13; 1 Jn 5:20).

¶8,9 Your throne: Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 45:6,7. He has ascended to the throne of God, and thus, reigns secure at the right hand of God (Dn 7:13,14; Lk 1:33; compare comments 1 Co 15:26-28). He is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. He now has the scepter of absolute authority over all things (2:8,9; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). **Anointed You:** In the nation of Israel, kings had to be anointed by God in order to reign as God-ordained kings. No angel was ever anointed to reign. Jesus has been anointed by God, and thus, is now King (Is 61:1,3). **10-12** This quotation of Psalm 102:25-27 is given in order to remind the readers of the

are the work of Your hands.

11 *They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old as a garment.*

12 *And as a mantle You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail."*

13 ¶ But to which of the angels did He ever say, "*Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool?*"

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation?

Chapter 2

1 ¶ Therefore, we must give more earnest attention to the things that we have heard so that we do not drift away.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment,

3 how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*,

4 God also bearing witness with them, both

creative work of the Lord (Jesus). In preexistence, Jesus created all things (Jn 1:1-3; Cl 1:16). **They will perish:** Though the physical world is passing away, the Lord continues. Eternality is indigenous with the Son because He is God. Everything that exists must receive the power to exist from God. It is for this reason that not even angels can be considered to be eternal. Only God is eternal, and thus, all that now exists receives the opportunity to exist solely from God. Since the material world is not eternal in and of itself, it will perish (Is 34:4; 51:6; Mt 24:35; 2 Pt 3:10-12). **13 Your footstool:** See Ps 110:1 (Compare Ps 5:6,10; 8:1; 12:2; Mt 22:41-46; At 2:33-35). Jesus has been set in a royal position until the time when He has subjugated all enemies (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28). **14 Ministering spirits:** Angels have been designated by God to be servants. Jesus is the master of all things. It is the work of the servants to carry out the will of the master. We are not told the nature of the work of angels. This unique statement in Scripture simply states the fact that angels are sent forth for the purpose of ministering to the needs of the saints (Compare Ps 103:20; Dn 7:10).

Chapter 2

HOLDING TO THE GREAT SALVATION

1 We must give the more earnest attention: The writer has just concluded with the subject of the supremacy of Jesus over angels. Jesus is the Son of God (1:5). He is to be worshiped by angels (1:6). He is ruler over all things (1:8,13). He is eternal (1:10-12). Therefore, the things that have come to us through Him demand greater attention. Since they demand greater attention, we have greater responsibility to keep them. **That we do not drift away:** If one does not give strict attention to the will of God that has been delivered to us in these last days through Jesus, then he will fall away from them (6:4-6; 2 Pt 1:9-11; 2:20-22; 3:12). As Christians who live under this dispensation of God's revelation through Jesus, we have a greater knowledge of the word and work of God, and thus, we have a greater responsibility to keep those things that have been delivered to us (See Lk 12:48). Our greater responsibility thus assumes that God will demand of us greater things. **2,3 Word spoken through angels:** The Old Testament law was given through angels to Moses (Dt 33:2; At 7:53; Gl 3:19). Those to whom the law was given were held accountable to the law. Those who violated the law did not escape the punishment of the law (Nm

15:30). Since the Old Testament law is deemed inferior to the law of Christ, then certainly those who sin under the law of Christ will not escape punishment (See 10:28,31). No one will escape the final judgment, which judgment will be through the Son, through whom God now speaks (1:1,2). God now speaks through the Son, and in the end, will judge all the world through Him because He rules over all things (Mt 28:18; At 17:30,31; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). **Began to be spoken by the Lord:** The initiation of the gospel dispensation was by Jesus who first preached the good news (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15; Jn 1:17; At 10:36,37). **Confirmed to us:** When Jesus concluded His ministry, He commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). After Pentecost in A.D. 30, therefore, they went everywhere, preaching the gospel with the confirmation of the miraculous work of God (Mk 16:20; see Lk 1:2; 1 Jn 1:1). Herein is defined the purpose for which God worked miracles through His messengers. The miracles were worked in order to prove the message that was spoken. Since the message was new to the world, it needed to be miraculously confirmed to be from God. It needed to be confirmed in order that men understand that it was not just another theological philosophy of another man-made religion of the world. This purpose of miracles, therefore, argues against miracles occurring that would work against God's confirming work through miracles. Since the miracles occurred in order to confirm the new message of the gospel and the messengers who proclaimed it, there is no need for miracles today since the message is not new to the world. The message has been recorded. The lives of those who first preached it have also been recorded. Since the message and messengers have already been confirmed, and thus, do not need further confirmation through miraculous manifestations, there is no need for miracles today. God now expects the written word of God to be sufficient to supply the man of God unto every good work (2 Tm 3:16,17). He expected the word of God to stand alone as proof of itself in a world of false religious beliefs. Because God expects this, He gave through Jude the command that we "*earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jd 3). In the first century God contended for the faith through the miraculous works that occurred through the hands of those who preached the word for the first time. This word was delivered to all men. God now expects us to contend for the truth of the word. God expects His messengers today to know His word well enough to use it as

with signs and wonders and with various powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.

5 ¶ For He did not subject the world to come to angels, concerning which we are speaking.

6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, “*What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You care about him?*”

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands.

8 *You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*” For in subjecting all things to Him, He left nothing *that is* not put under Him. But now we do not yet see all things put under Him.

its own evidence to be the actual revealed word of God. This is why He affirms that the word of God is able to furnish the man of God unto every good work. **4 Signs:** The word “signs” comes from the Greek word *semeion* which defined the purpose of a miraculous occurrence. Miracles were given to signal the presence of God with the one who works the wonder to confirm the message he preached (See Mt 12:38; 16:1-3; Jn 2:18; 1 Co 14:22; 2 Co 12:12; 2 Th 3:17). **Wonders:** A miracle as a wonder emphasized the impact the occurrence had on those who beheld its happening (See At 2:22,43; 2 Co 12:2). **Powers:** The Greek word here is *dunamai* and should actually be translated “powers.” Miracles as powers manifested the supernatural force that was behind the occurrence of the miracle (See Lk 1:35; 5:17; 6:19; 1 Co 2:4). The word “miracle” is an English word that is often used today to generically explain any happening that is unexplainable to the beholders of the phenomena. In today’s world it is used to explain a host of phenomena in the religiously misguided world. These misguided explanations are often read into the Bible in order to define biblical miracles. Such is an unfortunate act of interpretation that has diluted the definition of the true miracles of God as they were worked by God through His messengers. Bible students, therefore, must be careful not to allow their own experiences to define actions of God through signs, wonders and powers as they are defined by the Bible. The Bible must be our only dictionary in reference to making definitions of miracles. **Gifts of the Holy Spirit:** Through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to others in the first century (See comments Mk 16:14-20; At 2:38,39; 8:18; Rm 1:11; 1 Co 12). These gifts were given according to the will of God. They were not given according to the will of man (1 Co 12:4,7,11). Though the use of the gifts were subject to the one who possessed them (2 Tm 1:6), their proper use was guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the gifts, therefore, was determined by God, not man. In this context the writer of Hebrews is discussing the early beginnings of the church. The word of God was first spoken. It was later written as it was being done in this epistle. Therefore, the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit was to sustain the establishment and growth of the church until the church could be turned over to the Spirit-inspired written word of God. Now that the inspired word of God has come, there is no more the need for the miraculous work of the Spirit through confirming miracles and revelation (See comments 1 Co 13:8-13; Jd 3; see comments Jn 20:30,21).

nation of the worshipers. These gods are not of the nature that is described by the God of the Bible who has revealed Himself through the Son on the cross. It is in this chapter that we are again reminded that we serve a God who was willing to humiliate Himself before us on a cross outside Jerusalem in order to deliver us from our sin. It was difficult for the Jews to accept the concept that the Messiah would undergo such treatment (1 Co 1:23). For this reason, it was difficult for them to accept Jesus as the Messiah. But in this section of revelation we discover that the sacrificial work of the Son was necessary in order to establish the divine link of redemption between God and man. **5 The world to come:** According to Jewish thought, this concept referred to the messianic age. Though the writer is in the messianic age (“the world to come”), he writes in a manner that places himself and his readers in a pre-messianic age under the Old Testament law and covenant. It is this age about which he speaks. The things of this age have not been placed under the control of angels. In continuing the thoughts of chapter 1, the writer now contrasts the authority of Jesus with angels in order to proclaim the superiority of Jesus’ authority over that of angels. **6-8** The quotation of Psalm 8:4-8 is here applied to the work and position of Jesus (See Jb 7:17). In the original context David applied it first to man who is the crown of God’s creation. However, in this context, the Hebrew writer takes the thought of the passage beyond man. Reference is now made to the “Son of Man” who is the Messiah. The animals and earth that God created were subjugated to the control of man (Gn 1:28). In this dispensation (the messianic age), however, all things have now been placed under the Son of Man, Jesus (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:9-11). **A little lower than the angels:** This is the Septuagint reading of Psalm 8:5. In David’s original application of Psalm 8, he discussed man who was placed over that which was created. Adam, therefore, was greater than angels because the animals and land of creation was not placed under angels. Though angels were a higher being in the sense that they were not limited to the physical world, Adam was given authority over the animals and land of the physical world because he was greater than the physical world. Angels did not receive this position. However, after Adam sinned, he lowered his status, and thus, was the representative of all men who have lowered themselves through sin (Rm 5:12). Adam suffered the consequences of his sin which was separation from the tree of life, and thus he had to physically die (Gn 3:22-24; 1 Co 15:20-22). Through sin, he separated himself from God, and thus, suffered spiritual death (Rm 5:12; Is 59:2). In this sense, therefore, he became lower than the angels. In the context here, the sinless Christ is exalted above an-

THE SON'S HUMILIATION FOR OUR SAKE

Religions of the world create gods after the imagi-

9 But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that He by the grace of God might taste death for everyone.

10 ¶ For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers,
12 saying, “*I will declare Your name to My*

brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

13 And again, “*I will put My trust in Him.*” And again, “*Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.*”

14 ¶ Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

15 and deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For assuredly, He does not give aid to

gels. He did not fall in sin as Adam. Angels ministered to Him (Mt 4:11; 26:53). Through His death and burial, He was for a moment made a “little lower” than angels. However, He is now exalted above all things, including angels (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). He is now crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of God (See Dn 7:13,14). **All things in subjection under His feet:** We must not underestimate the significance of this concept that is here rehearsed by the Hebrew writer. Jesus presently reigns over all things as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15; see comments Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:5-11). There is nothing outside the galactic control of Jesus. All that is seen and unseen are under His control. **We do not yet see all things put under Him:** The Hebrew writer does not want us to make the common mistake that many biblical students have made concerning the authority and control of Jesus. Though Jesus allows Satan to have his control so as to deceive and wreck the lives of many on earth, we must not be led to conclude that things are out of Jesus’ control. Jesus still upholds all things by the word of His power (1:3). He still reigns supreme over all things. Though we do not perceive the totality of His present reign at this time, there is coming a time when all things, including Satan, will be subjugated to the power of His reign. Simply because we do not now see all things forcibly put into order by His control does not mean that He is not in control. There are always insurrections in kingdoms. So it is with the kingdom of Jesus. However, there will be a time when the Judge will pour out judgment and bring everything into control in the new heavens and earth that is yet to come (See comments 1 Co 15:24-28; 2 Pt 3:13). **9** Through the cross, Jesus was willing to become lower than the angels in order that He might bring into being the eternal plan of redemption for man (See comments Ph 2:5-11). No angel was ever humiliated for this cause. The result of His death was His crowning (Dn 7:13,14; Jn 15:13; At 2:33; 3:13; 1 Pt 1:21). The result of His crowning was His reign over all things. **Taste death for everyone:** Jesus partook of physical death on behalf of all those who have to live in fear of death (2:14,15). Through His death on the cross we now have the opportunity for a spiritual resurrection from sin. As a result of His resurrection from the tomb, we have hope of a physical resurrection to come (See comments Rm 6:3-6).

JESUS, THE AUTHOR

10 For whom are all things: All things were created by and for Jesus (Cl 1:16; see comments Jn 1:1-3). **Author of their salvation:** The Greek word here translated “author” is used in other contexts in reference to Jesus’ being the author of our salvation (See 12:2; At 3:15; 5:31). He is thus the one who originated our salvation through His death on the cross (5:8,9). **Perfect through sufferings:** Jesus was qualified to be the author of our salvation through the sufferings of the cross (7:28; see comments Rv 5:9,10). **11 All of one:** Both Jesus who sanctifies (10:10), and the saints who are sanctified by the blood of Jesus (At 17:26), originate from God who is the one from whom all sanctification comes. Since sin is against God, then it is in reference to God that all must be made holy. **Call them brothers:** Since the sanctified are now cleansed by the blood of Jesus, He is not ashamed to call them His brethren (Mt 28:10). Jesus is the head of the body (Cl 1:18). The universal body is composed of those He has sanctified with His blood (1 Co 12:27). **12,13** Though the prophets were the original speakers of these words that are quoted here, the Hebrew writer makes Jesus the speaker (Ps 22:22; Ps 18:2; Is 12:2). **Midst of the assembly:** Jesus is pleased to join with His global assembly in singing praises to God. **My trust:** Isaiah, who originally spoke these words (Is 8:17,18), manifested his dependence on God. The Hebrew writer quotes these words to refer to the trust the Son had in the Father. **I and the children:** In the context of the original words, Isaiah spoke them in order to proclaim his dependence on God. In the context of the readers of this epistle, Jesus, and the children that God has given to Him, have put their trust in God (Compare Is 53:10; Jn 10:27-29).

DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

14,15 Partook of the same: Since man was created flesh and blood, it was necessary that Jesus become the same in order to identify with him (Jn 1:14; Ph 2:5-11). It was necessary for Jesus to incarnate in order to deliver man from the curse of sin and death (See prophecy of Is 25:7,8). Both spiritual and physical death were brought into the world through sin. Spiritual death resulted from sin in that Adam, and all who sinned after the manner of Adam, are separated from God (Is 59:1,2;

angels. But He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, so that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people.

18 For since He Himself has suffered *while* being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Chapter 3

1 ¶ Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the

heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, **2** who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all his house.

3 For this One was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

4 For every house is built by someone. But He who built all things *is* God.

5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things that were to be spoken later.

Rm 5:12). Physical death entered into the world as a result of Adam, as well as all mankind, being separated from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24; 1 Co 15:20-22). Jesus came to deal with man's death problems. Through His own death, therefore, He has delivered us from the power of sin, and thus, the power of death (1 Jn 3:8). He destroyed spiritual death by the power of His atonement (2 Tm 1:10; 1 Jn 3:8,9). His resurrection from the dead has revealed that those in Him will be raised from the dead in order to enjoy eternal life (1 Co 15:26; Rv 20:14).

Fear of death: One may fear how he would die. However, one does not have to fear death in Christ. Emotional strength over death is discovered by those who have confidence in Jesus who has given us victory over death (See comments 1 Th 4:13-18). Christians have faith that they will be raised from the dead because the One in whom they have believed was raised (1 Co 15:20; see Ps 68:18; Is 42:7; 45:13; 49:9; 61:1). **16 Aid to the seed of Abraham:** These are those who are children of Abraham by faith (See comments Rm 4:10ff; Gl 3:7-9,29). Jesus did not become flesh for the sake of angels. He became as man in order to accomplish for man that which sin denies, that is, eternal life in the presence of God (See comments Ph 2:5-11). He took on the form of man in order to deliver man from his state of condemnation (4:15). **17 To make propitiation for the sins of the people:** In order to atone for the sins of man, the preexistent Son of God had to be incarnate in the physical nature of those He would redeem (4:15; Ph 2:5-11). His incarnation, therefore, was necessary in order to qualify Him to be our high priest.

Propitiation: This work on the part of Jesus would be atonement for our sins in order that we again be reconciled to God (See comments Rm 3:25; compare 2 Co 5:19; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10). No animal sacrifice could have accomplished this deed (10:1-4). No man could have atoned for our sins. There had to be a link between God and man in order to carry out the work of atonement. It was necessary, therefore, that God fully incarnate in the flesh of man in order to deliver man from both spiritual and physical death. **18 He is able to aid:** Since Jesus partook of the nature of man, and thus, was tempted as a man, He is able to understand our predicament (4:15,16). He is able to understand the afflictions of those who are weak because He was tempted by the same afflictions in the same environment in which all men live. The Christian, therefore, does not have a God who stands off in the far corners of

the universe and heaps down condemnation and judgment. He has a God who identified with man in order to deliver him from the confines of a material world.

Chapter 3

JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO MOSES

The writer has concluded his comparison between Christ and angels. He now contrasts the Old Testament covenant, with Moses as the one through whom it was delivered and Aaron who functioned as high priest, with the New Testament covenant where Jesus is both the mediator through which the covenant and law came and is now the high priest. **1,2 Apostle:** Moses was God's official representative to the nation of Israel. He functioned as the mediator through whom the law was given. Christ Jesus was the one who was sent ("apostle"). He was the one through whom the law and covenant were established (See Jn 3:17; 20:21; Rm 15:8; Ph 2:5-8). **High Priest:** Aaron was designated the high priest when the Old Testament law and covenant were established with Israel. On the other hand, Jesus has now been established as the high priest on behalf of Christians. He is the one who works on behalf of Christians in reference to sin, and thus, the one through whom our attention must be focused in our appeal to God. **Who was faithful:** Moses was faithful to his calling to function as a mediator between God and Israel (Ps 110:4; Ex 40:16; Nm 12:1-7; Hb 3:5). Jesus has been faithful to His calling and work (Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Lk 22:42). It was because of the faithfulness of Jesus to do the work of God that we have the opportunity to approach God through Him in confession of our sin. **3 He who built the house:** In fulfillment of prophecy (Zc 6:12,13), Jesus is the one who built the house of God (See Mt 16:18; 1 Tm 3:15). Moses and all men are only servants of God's work (vs 5). Jesus is thus greater than Moses or any man simply because He is the one who has constructed the house. **4** In view of the fact that some to whom the writer addresses this letter may consider Jesus as just another angel or prophet, the writer wants us to understand that God is the master architect. Since Jesus built the house as affirmed in verse 3, then He is of God who is affirmed to be the builder of all things in this verse. In reference to the eternal scheme of redemption, we must not separate the totality of the Godhead (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in His work to bring about the universal body of Christ (See comments Ep 3:8-13).

6 But Christ was faithful as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast to the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

7 ¶ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “*Today if you will hear His voice,*

8 *do not harden your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness,*

9 *when your fathers tried Me, tested Me, and saw My works forty years.*

10 *Therefore, I was grieved with that gen-*

eration, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart. And they have not known My ways.’

11 *So I swore in My wrath, ‘They will not enter into My rest.’”*

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

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called “*Today,*” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ

Though we know Christ as the builder, we must understand, therefore, that it was God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who were working as one to accomplish the work of bringing into being the predestined plan of salvation. God is one, and thus, works as one (See 1:2; 1 Co 11:3; Ep 2:10). The work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the same, though all three as God have manifested God as three in order to carry out different works to bring man into eternal dwelling. **5 Servant:** Moses was indeed a faithful servant to the work of God to bring into existence the nation of God (Ex 14:31; 40:16; Nm 12:7; Ps 2:7). **6 Christ ... as a Son:** Moses was simply a servant. However, Jesus is the Son over the house in which Moses was only a servant (1:2). **Whose house we are:** The household of the church was built in fulfillment of the physical household of Israel. Those who have come to Jesus, the one over the house, have come into the house of God (See 1 Co 3:16; 1 Tm 3:15). **If we hold fast:** There is always the possibility of apostasy. Simply because one is saved in the household of God does not mean that he cannot fall from the grace of God. The Hebrew writer puts the sentence here in the subjunctive in order to remind us that we can fall from the house of God (See Mt 10:22; Rm 5:2; Cl 1:23; see comments 2 Pt 2:20-22).

MAINTAINING FAITHFULNESS

7-11 Beginning here the writer calls for faithfulness among his readers. He introduces this section by referring them to the apostasy of those in the Old Testament who hardened their hearts against the will of God, and subsequently, suffered the chastisement of the Lord. **The Holy Spirit says:** The quotation of verses 7-11 is from Psalm 95:7-11. Though David was the original inspired writer, the Hebrew writer gives direct credit to the source of the statement (See 10:15; At 1:16). The same could be made of all the Bible, for all Scripture came by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17; 1 Pt 1:20,21). **Do not harden your hearts:** When one refuses to accept and obey the word of God, he hardens his heart. He refuses to submit his emotions and intellect to the control of God. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every individual to submit to the will of God. God did not subjectively submit those about whom the writer here refers. Our free-moral agency places the responsibility for a hardened heart upon the shoulders of those who will not hear. **The provocation:** After Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity, they rebelled against God in Sinai. This was a time where their rebellion provoked

God to judge them. They were subsequently condemned to wandering in the wilderness of Sinai for forty years (See Ex 17:1-7; Nm 14:1-28; 20:1-13; Dt 9:10). **Not enter into My rest:** God was greatly displeased with the rebellious attitude of Israel. As a result, He did not allow them to enter the rest of the land of Canaan (See Dt 12:9). All those over the age of twenty at the time they were at Mount Sinai, were not allowed to enter because of their rebellious attitude. Israel's rebellion, however, worked to the advantage of some in Canaan, as Rahab, who by faith came to believe that God was with Israel (See Ja 2:8-10; Js 2:25). God gave the Canaanites forty years of opportunity to repent before He judged them through the armies of Israel. **12 Application** is here made to those who would rebel against God after the same attitude as those during the time of rebellion when Israel rebelled at Mount Sinai. **An evil heart of unbelief:** Israel's rebellion against God is here identified as unbelief. They rebelled because they did not believe God. If one truly believes, his belief will motivate obedience to the will of God (See comments Js 2:14-17). The writer exhorts his readers not to be guilty of unbelief, and thus, be led astray into apostasy. If they do not take heed to maintain an obedient belief, they will fall away from the truth. **Departing:** This passage clearly shows that a Christian can fall away from the truth so as to be lost (See comments 2 Pt 2:20-22). **The living God:** In contrast to dead idols and fetishes, the God of heaven is active in the lives of men (9:14; 10:31; 12:22; At 14:15; 1 Tm 3:15). Because He does not take immediate action in the lives of the disobedient, one must not be deceived into believing that He will not take action. There is a great day coming when He will rain down judgment upon all the disobedient. **13 Exhort one another:** Christians have a responsibility toward one another in relation to faithfulness to the Lord. They must daily encourage one another to remain faithful to the Lord (See comments Gl 6:1,2; see Ep 5:19). The church is a global community of believers who are responsible for one another. No one can be a child of God and at the same time live outside the fellowship of God's community. We must submit ourselves to the exhortation of our brethren in order that we not be overtaken in any sin (See 1 Jn 5:16). **Deceitfulness of sin:** Sin is deceiving in that it appears to bring pleasure and the satisfaction of one's own self. It is often exciting, thus giving a short-term excitement or moment of pleasure. However, when one reaps the consequences of a life of sin, the pleasure is gone. The final result of sin

if we hold to the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

15 while it is said, “*Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.*”

16 ¶ For who were those who heard and rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses?

17 But with whom was He grieved forty years? *Was it* not with those who had sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but to those who

were disobedient?

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

Chapter 4

1 ¶ Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering into His rest, any of you may seem to come short of it.

2 For to us was the gospel preached, as well as to them. But the preached word did not profit them, because it was not united with faith in those who heard.

3 For we who have believed enter that rest,

will be the condemnation of one to hell (Js 1:14,15). **14,15 Partakers:** Those who remain faithful to the calling of the gospel will join with Christ in eternal glory in heaven (vs 6). **If we hold:** The condition for the reward is faithfulness to that which we heard, that is, the gospel. The writer places this in the subjunctive, and thus, there is a condition for being a partaker with Christ. That condition is continued faithful obedience as opposed to those who hardened their hearts in the time of rebellion (vs 8; Nm 14:2). We must be faithful, therefore, even if it means martyrdom (Rv 2:10; Mt 24:13).

THE DISASTROUS RESULT OF UNBELIEF

The writer begins here with a discussion of the promised rest that God has laid before Christians. This discussion begins with verse 16 here and extends through 4:15. **16** Though God had confirmed the leadership of Moses with miracles and punishment for disobedience to his voice, those of Israel over the age of twenty who came out of Egypt rebelled against God's will that was spoken through Moses. The majority rose up against God's anointed leadership, and thus, rebelled against God. One should never follow the majority when dealing with the direct commands of God. During the historical case of this illustration, Joshua and Caleb stood against the wishes of the majority. They took a stand to do the will of God by entering into the land of promise (Nm 14:6-9,24,30). **17** As a result of Israel's unbelief, the nation of Israel was cursed with forty years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai (See Nm 14:20-32). **All those over the age of twenty died during this period.** **18 Who were disobedient:** The writer here defines what he meant by unbelief in verse 12 (See 4:6,11). Those who did not believe, disobeyed. Unbelief, therefore, results in disobedience. Disobedience in the eyes of God is unbelief. One cannot claim to believe in God if he does not obey the will of God. The rebellious of Israel were disobedient because of their unbelief (Dt 32:20). Therefore, they were not allowed to enter the promised rest of Canaan because of their disbelief. The same will happen to the Hebrew readers if they do not continue in belief of what God has commanded through Jesus. If their faith does not move them to continue to obey, they will not be able to enter the rest of heaven (See comments Js 2:14-26). **19** As the Israelites who rebelled could not enter the rest of Canaan because of unbelief and disobedience, so no Christian will be able to enter the rest of heaven if he does not hold fast to his

confession (See Dt 12:9; Ps 95:11; compare 1 Co 10:11,12). If the Christian's faith does not move him into obedience to the will of God, he will not enter into God's final rest of heaven. This does not mean that one's obedience is meritorious in reference to being paid the wages of heaven. No amount of work one can do will merit the reward of heaven (See comments Rm 8:18). What we shall receive is more than what we can ever earn. What obedience does indicate, however, is the fact that our faith has substance. And that substance is that we trust in God's grace rather than ourselves, for we are saved by grace (Ep 2:8,9).

Chapter 4

FINAL REST FOR THE FAITHFUL

The Hebrew writer moves into the subject of this chapter without changing the subject of the previous discussion. The rest of the land of Canaan was the hope of Israel after Egyptian captivity. This hope illustrates the rest into which every Christian seeks to enter. God has established the hope of a rest for faithful Christians in heaven to come (Rv 14:13). **1 Let us fear:** The thought here is that we must caution ourselves to live obediently because we can lose the hope of our rest by the deceitfulness of sin (3:14). Since it is possible to lose our rest through disobedience, every Christian must be in fear of losing such (12:15; 2 Co 6:1; see Gl 5:4). He must be diligent to make his calling and election sure (2 Pt 1:10). **A promise remains:** There is yet a rest to come for the faithful. This rest was included in the rest of Canaan that was promised to Israel. Canaan was the rest on earth for Israel, however, heaven is the final rest for all the faithful, including the faithful of Israel (Ps 95:11). **2 The gospel preached:** The good news (gospel) of the rest was proclaimed to Israel. However, because they did not have a faith that would move them to obedience, they looked back to Egypt (Nm 13). The word of promise was not fulfilled in their lives because they did not believe in the power of God to bring about that which He promised. They did not believe that God would give the Canaanites into their hand. The good news of a rest in heaven has also been proclaimed to the household of God today. If one does not believe that God will bring him into heaven, he will turn back into the world. Unbelief will destroy his motivation for being obedient to the commandments of God. **United with faith:** The promise of the final rest of heaven will

as He has said, “*As I have sworn in My wrath, they will not enter into My rest,*” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this manner, “*And God rested on the seventh day from all His works*”;

5 and again in this passage, “*They will not enter into My rest.*”

6 ¶ Therefore, since it remains for some to enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of disobedience,

7 again He designates a certain day, saying through David, “*Today,*” after so long a time, as it has been said, “*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.*”

8 ¶ For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God.

10 For he who has entered into His rest has also ceased from his own works, as God *did* from His.

11 ¶ Therefore, let us labor to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 And there is no creature that is hidden

be fulfilled when mixed with the obedient faith of those who have committed themselves to the will of God. **2** **Will not enter:** If one does not have faith in the word of promise, then he will reap the same consequences as those who did not believe in Israel (Ps 95:11). **Works were finished:** The final rest of heaven has been in God's plan since before the creation of the world. Since the creation of man, God has given to man the hope of an existence beyond the creation. The hope that this world is not all there is was promised to man from the very beginning. Though God's work of physical creation was finished since the creation, He will work again in order to create a new heavens and earth that is not according to this present environment (2 Pt 3:13). Christians, therefore, must have faith that God is able to create for them a new dwelling (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). Since we are not experiencing the creating work of God at this time, therefore, we should not be deceived into thinking that God will not create again. **4,5** **God rested:** See Gn 2:1-3; Ex 20:11. God rested from the work of creating on the seventh day after the week of creation. He desires that we enter into rest with Him. However, those as disobedient Israel who refused to maintain obedient faith, will not enter into rest with God (Ps 95:11).

6,7 The writer here quoted from Psalm 95 which was a psalm of David. When David wrote Psalm 95, the hope of entering the rest through faith still existed. The Hebrew writer affirmed that it was still possible to enter through obedient faith at the time this letter was written. The condition for entering is still the same. One must act with obedience in response to his faith. **8** **Joshua:** Joshua led the faithful of Israel into the rest of Canaan. But such was only a physical rest from the wanderings of the wilderness. Canaan was a rest from their Egyptian captivity, wilderness wanderings, and battles to take the land. However, it was not their final rest. There was another rest to which Israel was directed. It was the same rest that Christians today have hope of receiving. This is the rest of eternal dwelling in the presence of God (2 Co 5:1-8; 2 Pt 3:13). **9,10** **There remains:** The rest that remains is the new heavens

and earth that is yet to come (2 Pt 3:13). It is for this final heavenly rest that Christians hope (6:19,20; see Rm 8:24,25). **Ceased from his works:** The writer here speaks from the position of having already entered the rest. God rested from the work of creation in that He ceased creating (Gn 2:1-3). His rest illustrates the rest of the faithful when they finally enter into heaven. They rest from their labors on this earth (Rv 14:13).

11 **Let us labor:** The Greek word here (*dasomen*) refers to one hastily or eagerly making every effort to accomplish a goal. Christians are thus exhorted to eagerly make every effort to arrive at the goal of heaven. We make our calling sure by obedience (2 Pt 1:10; see Ep 4:3; 2 Tm 2:15; 2 Pt 3:12-14). **Lest anyone fall:** If one is not making every effort to maintain the goal of eternal heaven, he will be diverted by things that are of this world. This is what happened to those of Israel who took their minds off the land of Canaan. Because their faith in the rest of Canaan was not strong enough, they looked back to that from which they came. They knew the situation they were in while captives in Egypt. Because they wanted to walk by sight and not faith, they could not reach forward to those things that were before (Lk 9:62). **12** **The word of God is living:** In this context, this passage refers to the stability or surety of the promise of God's word. He has promised the rest that is to come. Because He has made the promise, it will happen. Christians must walk by faith in the word of God's promise (11:11; see comments Rm 4:13-22). When one trusts in the promise of God, then God's word is able to transform one's life. Therefore, there can be no change in life unless one focuses his attention on the promise that God will justly reward those who remain faithful. It is imperative that Christians maintain a strong faith in reference to what God has promised. If they do, then their lives will conform to that which they believe. They will mold their lives around God's word in order to make their calling and election sure. **Sharper than any two-edged sword:** God's word is not dead. It is here metaphorically illustrated as living, and thus, a two-edged sword that is able to cut both ways in correcting one's behavior. It is living because God lives.

from His sight. But all things *are* naked and opened to the eyes of Him to whom we have to give account.

14 ¶ Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *to our* confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all things tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne

of grace, so that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Chapter 5

1 ¶ For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertain-*ing to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He can have compassion on the ignorant and misguided, since He himself also is subject to weakness.

3 And because of it, he is obligated for the

No realm of the human life escapes its penetrating power and judgments. The effectiveness of its power is illustrated every day by the transformed lives of formerly hardened sinners who have yielded to its instructions. The transformed lives of gentle and humble servants of God are a continual testimony to the awesome power of God's word upon a meek and subjective heart (See Ps 119). **13 *No creature ... hidden from His sight:*** One must not be deceived into thinking that he can receive the promise of God, and yet, turn back from a life that is directed by the promise of God. Verse 12 speaks of the surety of the word of promise. This verse speaks of the God of the word of promise. God is omniscient (all-knowing). Nothing escapes His knowledge (1 Sm 16:7; 1 Ch 28:9; Ps 90:8; 139:1,2; Jb 26:6). One must not lead himself to believe that he can turn from the life that is directed by God's word, and at the same time, escape the judgment that will result from disobedience (See 2 Co 5:10).

OUR COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST

The writer concludes the previous exhortation to keep our minds on the final rest with an introduction here of the high priesthood of Jesus. Beginning here, the discussion centers around Jesus as our high priest who works in a greater capacity than the high priest of the Old Testament law and covenant. **14 *A great high priest:*** In chapter 1 Jesus was affirmed to be greater than angels. Though Moses was faithful, as discussed in chapter 3, Jesus is our faithful mediator. In this context, Jesus is portrayed to be greater than the high priesthood of Aaron and those priests who followed him under the Old Testament law. The reason Jesus is greater is in the fact that He, but not Aaron, ascended to the right hand of God in heaven (7:26; 8:1; 9:24; Ep 4:10). **Confession:** Since Jesus is our high priest, we must make a commitment to hold to our confession by dedicating ourselves to Him (See 3:1; 10:23; Rm 10:9,10; 2 Tm 2:11-13). **15 *In all things tempted as we are:*** As our high priest, Jesus is not unsympathetic. When He came into the flesh of this world, He emptied Himself of the form of God (Ph 2:5-8; compare Is 53:3-5). He became as the man whom He created in the beginning (See Cl 1:16). In this way He could identify with those He came to deliver from sin and the confinement of physical dwelling on earth. He became man to the point of being able to be tempted as man (See comments Mt 4:1-11; Lk 22:28). Therefore, since Jesus could be tempted, it would also have been possible for Him to

sin. The extent of His incarnation is seen in the fact that He could be tempted to sin just as man. **16 *Come boldly to the throne of grace:*** Since Jesus is sympathetic toward our situation, we can have confidence to approach the authority (throne) of God. It is not that we come to God on the basis of meritorious works or perfect law-keeping. We can approach Him on the basis of the grace that was revealed through Him (Ti 2:11). In contrast to the Old Testament law wherein one would have to live perfectly according to law in order to feel justified to approach God, under the New Testament covenant of grace, one can come boldly before God on the basis of the cross, not the merit of his works (See 10:19,22; Ep 2:18; 1 Jn 3:21). It is at the throne of Jesus that we find mercy and grace. We find understanding and forgiveness because as our high priest, Jesus endured the same environment in which we live.

Chapter 5

QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIGH PRIESTHOOD

This chapter continues the discussion of the high priest work of Jesus that was started in 4:14. Jesus' work as high priest is exalted in order to convince the readers that in view of the superior work of Jesus as our high priest, it would be foolish to return to the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament law and covenant. **1 *Taken from among men:*** Under the Old Testament law, the high priest was a man who was born of the tribe of Levi. The fact that he was a man gave him the opportunity to understand those for whom he labored as high priest. In the same way, Jesus was incarnate in the flesh in order that He might identify with our needs (4:14; Jn 1:14; Ph 2:6-8). **May offer both gifts and sacrifices:** On the day of atonement, the high priest of the Old Testament covenant offered gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people (ch 9; Lv 16). **2 *He can have compassion:*** The writer does not want us to stray from the point that Jesus became as man in order to become the high priest for man. Jesus is not untouchable in the sense that He is now exalted above those things the worshipers have to endure. The high priest who is appointed from among men can identify with the needs of weak and frail worshipers. In the same way, Jesus understands our situation because He endured the environment in which all men live. **3 *Required ... to offer:*** Because of the weakness of humanity, including the high priest, the high priest was required under the Old Testament law to offer the annual sacrifice for sins for the

people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins.

4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called of God, even as Aaron was.

5 ¶ So also Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest, but He who said to Him, “*You are My Son. Today, I have begotten You.*”

6 As He says also in another *place*, “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*”

7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up

prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death. And He was heard because of His reverent submission.

8 Though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.

9 And having been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him,

10 being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

11 About whom we have many things to say, and hard to explain, seeing you have become

nation of Israel. The sacrifice was not only for the nation, but also for himself (Lv 4:3; 9:7; 16:1-24; see Hb 7:27; 9:7). **4 Called by God:** Under the Old Testament law, no man could assume the responsibility of high priesthood by appointing himself. He had to be designated by God, which thing God did when He appointed Aaron and his sons as high priests of Israel at Mount Sinai (See Ex 28:1; Nm 16:40; 20:23-29; 25:10-13; 1 Ch 23:13; Ps 105:26).

JESUS QUALIFIES FOR HIGH PRIESTHOOD

5,6 So also Christ: Jesus did not of Himself assume the office and work of high priest (Compare Jn 5:31,43; 8:54). He was appointed to be high priest by the Father. **I have begotten You:** This quotation from Psalm 2:7 is here used to refer to Jesus being brought forth into the world by God for the purpose of functioning as our high priest (See 1:5). He was brought forth into the world through the virgin birth of a woman, and thus, was incarnate into the flesh of man (Jn 1:1,2,14; Ph 2:6-8). **A priest forever:** See Ps 110:4. The use of the word “forever” (*aion*) signifies the result of Jesus’ appointment as high priest. The actual appointment was a onetime event. However, the effect of His appointment as high priest has unending consequences. In this sense, His high priest work continues without end. **Order of Melchizedek:** The writer will cover this subject in great detail in chapter 7. In this context, he introduces the concept that Jesus is a high priest with unending service for those who have come to the throne of grace (4:16). **7 In the days of His flesh:** Reference here could be to two things. First, the writer might possibly be referring to the concept that Jesus is not now in the flesh as He was while on earth. This would certainly be true in the sense that after His resurrection His body was changed as our body will be changed at His final coming (See comments 1 Co 15:50-56; 2 Co 5:1-8). When He comes again, we shall be like He now is (1 Jn 3:2). We do not know how He now is. Because we do not know how He now is, we know that He is not as we are in the flesh on this earth. Secondly, the Hebrew writer is contrasting the time of His earthly dwelling with His present heavenly dwelling. Emphasis, therefore, is on the time of His work. This would be His ministry on earth, and at this time, His existence at the right hand of God. **Prayers and supplications:** Jesus went through intense agony in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane in order to accomplish the present work He is doing as our

high priest (See Ps 22:1; Mt 26:37-39,42,44,53; 27:46; Mk 14:33-39; Lk 22:41,44; Jn 12:27). **Was able to save Him from death:** The humanity of Jesus while on earth is here revealed through the intensity of Jesus’ cries and tears as a human (Ps 22:1; Lk 22:41,42). The incarnation was complete. Jesus was not a divine phantom or spirit that dwelt among the disciples while on earth. He was human as all men (4:14-16). Before the crucifixion, He cried out for deliverance from the suffering His body would go through in physical death. Though He died on the cross, He was raised three days later. His prayer was thus answered in that He now lives as a result of the Father’s raising Him from the dead (Mt 26:53; Ep 1:20). **8 He learned obedience:** Though Jesus was the incarnate Son of God who was begotten into the world, He was not exempt from the purpose for which He came. He carried through (“learned”) with His destiny and the purpose for which He was incarnate into the flesh of man. As the Son of God, therefore, He came to die on the cross. Through obedience to the will of the eternal Godhead, He accomplished the purpose for which He came (Ph 2:8). **9 Having been made perfect:** Jesus’ obedience to the eternal scheme of redemption qualified Him to be our high priest (2:10). Since He is our high priest who functions on behalf of our sins, He is thus the one who has originated eternal salvation for those who obey the gospel of His death and resurrection (2:9; 10:10; see comments Rm 6:3-6). **Eternal salvation:** The salvation is eternal (*aiōnios*) in the sense that it was accomplished at one time in the past on the cross. However, the effect of the offering of the cross has unending consequences. It is not that He keeps on offering Himself on the cross. He offered Himself once and for all time. The emphasis of the onetime event, therefore, is on the effect. We live in the effect (eternal salvation) of His offering. **Obey Him:** Partaking in the effects of the cross is dependent upon our obedient response to the cross. Obedience, therefore, is the condition whereby one partakes in the atonement of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. **10 Designated by God:** Jesus has been called by God to be our High Priest. Under the Old Testament law no one could be high priest unless he was called by God (See Ex 28:1; Nm 20:23-29; 25:10-13). Jesus has now been called by God to function as our high priest. He is our high priest after the order of Melchizedek (See comments ch 7). **11 Hard to explain ... dull of hearing:** It was hard to explain because of the dullness of those to whom it

dull of hearing.

12 ¶ For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God. And *you* have come to need milk and not solid

food.

13 For everyone who partakes of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

14 But solid food belongs to those who are

would be explained. The subject is difficult only because of the lack of growth on the part of the hearers. The Corinthian situation was similar. Their problem was the lack of spiritual growth (Compare Mt 13:15; Jn 16:12). Because they were still carnal, Paul stated that he could not write to them great spiritual truths that needed to be understood by spiritual minds (See comments 1 Co 3:1-3). In this case, the Hebrews had become hardened to the truth about which the writer was writing. They had evidently turned their ears from the message to which they had been listening for several years. They had grown cold to the old story of the cross, and thus, their hearts were not stimulated by the story of love that was revealed on the cross. Their study of these matters, and subsequently their spiritual growth, had ceased because they had become indifferent to the appeal of the cross (See comments 10:26-31; 2 Pt 2:20-22).

SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY

12 *By this time you ought to be teachers:* This is one of the writer's major indictments against his readers. They lacked intellectual and spiritual growth. They had been Christians for many years (See 2:3; 10:32; 13:7). However, they had not grown to the spiritual and intellectual nature that is characteristic of teachers. It is evident that they had refused to accept the responsibility to grow. They had grown to a certain level of spiritual and intellectual capability. But there they had stopped. Since they had become "dull of hearing" (vs 11), they thus established a resistance to growth. The reason for this may be the result of their background. We could certainly assume that since the readers were Jewish converts that they had brought into Christianity the systematic religious thought of Jewish legalism (See comments in introduction to GI). Judaism was plagued with the practice of ceremonies and rituals after the traditions of the fathers (See comments Mk 7:1-9). In this system of religion, when one digresses in his religious behavior to the ritualistic observance of ceremonies and observance of traditions, inward spiritual growth terminates. Legalistic observance of one's religious codes will bring one to a certain level of spiritual growth. However, his spiritual growth terminates when he becomes complacent with a simple ceremonial observance of the minimum requirements of his religion. Ceremonial religiosity is a quick fix to a limited level of spiritual maturity. However, there is always an end to the growth as one becomes content with his practice of his religious ceremonialism (See comments CI 2:20-22). It seems that the readers here had brought into the church this system of ceremonial religiosity that hindered their spiritual growth. It had become empty, and thus, they were on the verge of return to the Judaism from which they had come. Another negative result of legal ceremonialism is that those who promote such usually stop their Bible studies. Once the ceremonies and beliefs of the religion are established, there is no more need for biblical studies. The lack of continued study and growth among the readers of this letter indicates that they had

digressed to the point of feeling no need to grow through biblical studies (See comments Rm 10:17). **Ought:** God expects growth. He expects us to grow beyond being weak brothers to being strong in the faith (2 Pt 3:18). If one does not learn the skills of spiritual growth, and exercise such in his life, then he is not a candidate for heaven. Heaven will be an environment for eternal spiritual growth. Those who do not know or have an attitude for spiritual growth will not be in heaven. **Teach you again the first principles:** These Christians illustrate the nature of too many disciples today who have ceased study of their Bibles, and thus, have given their thinking over to a professional clergy and the ceremony of their own religious habits. They had forgotten the spirit of Bible study by which they could grow past the elementary concepts of truth (6:1). They were certainly not as the Bereans who were considered noble by the Holy Spirit because they searched the Scriptures (At 17:11; see 2 Tm 2:15). When Christians become lazy in Bible study, they content themselves with a few first principles of God's word as the foundation of their belief. Their spiritual growth, therefore, is limited to a "first principle" level. Their faith is weak because they have not grown in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (Rm 10:17; 2 Pt 3:18). Their lack of knowledge, therefore, hinders them from continuing their spiritual growth. Because they are satisfied with milk, they complain when served solid food by those who would challenge their thinking. **Milk and not solid food:** Because of the carnal attitudes of the Corinthians, they had to be fed the milk of the word of God because their carnal thinking hindered them from understanding great spiritual truths (See comments 1 Co 3:1-3). Here the problem is intellectual laziness. They could not understand the solid food of the word because their minds had a "first principle" level of understanding. When churches begin to think that the teachers are teaching material that is too difficult to understand, the problem is not with the teachers, but with the audience who is not studying the oracles of God. The central point of this verse is the fact that every Christian must excel in a knowledge of the Scriptures as teachers excel in the word. The teachers among us are not qualified to be such because they have a greater knowledge of the word than any other member. They are teachers because of their spiritual nature and ability to communicate information to others. Every member of the church has the responsibility to study and know the word of God just as the teacher has studied and come to a knowledge of the word. The church has no professional scholars of the word of God to whom the members must relinquish their minds. **13 Unskilled in the word:** We must keep in mind that this letter is directed to every Christian. It is not directed specifically to any professional clergy. Therefore, the writer uses the phrase "unskilled in the word" in reference to every member of the church. When churches have "professionals" who are to be the "skilled in the word" so as to be the teachers, then the members of the church have become intellectually lazy in study of the word for themselves. No

mature, to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Chapter 6

1 ¶ Therefore, leaving the elementary principles of the Christ, let us go on to perfec-

tion, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 of the teaching of immersions, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this we will do if God permits.

church can hire its Bible study to be done for the members. When the members of a church are unskilled in the word, the church is in the beginnings of apostasy as the disciples to whom the Hebrew writer addresses this letter. Because of their intellectual laziness, and thus immaturity, these readers could not distinguish between truth and error. They could not separate their traditional religious practices and beliefs from what is actually the word of God. The context of the writer's exhortation is that one must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18). There must be both intellectual growth and spiritual growth by knowledge and application of the word of God. One cannot fully comprehend the fundamental teachings of the Bible unless he willingly puts what he learns into practice (See comments 1 Co 3:1-3). **14 Solid food:** A greater knowledge of the word of God gives one the ability to discern between good and evil. One can determine what is actually the word of God and what is tradition or opinion (See Is 7:15; Ph 1:9). When one spiritually grows up, he is able to use the word of God in order to make decisions concerning matters of life. The more one studies and grows, the more he will understand in the Bible. It is imperative to understand, therefore, that one's knowledge of the Bible is essential in order to grow in faith. "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Rm 10:17). In order to grow in faith, one must grow in his knowledge of the word of God.

Chapter 6

GROWING TO GUARD AGAINST APOSTASY

1,2 Elementary principles of Christ: This statement in Greek would literally read, "the word (*logos*) of the beginning of Christ." This context seems to indicate that reference here is to the first principles of the New Testament law of Christ. However, some students believe that reference is to Jewish proselyting practices in the first century. It is true that the Jews practiced ceremonial cleansings, or baptisms (See the use of the word *baptizo* in 9:10 and Mk 7:4; compare Nm 19; Ez 26). They practiced laying on of hands in order to commission one to a particular service (Nm 27:18,23; Dt 34:9; compare Ex 29:10; Lv 1:4). Except for the Sadducees, they believed in the resurrection of the dead (Is 26:19; Dn 12:2), eternal judgment (Dn 7:9ff), faith toward God and repentance of sins. However, in view of the writer's admonition that they should by now be teachers (5:12), the context seems to indicate that he has the first principles of New Testament teaching in mind as he continues the subject that was introduced in 5:12-14. The fact that reference here is to the first principles of New Testament teaching is further substantiated by the fact that the writer would not refer to Jewish practices and beliefs as the first principles of Christ. In 5:12 the writer had rebuked them for not growing intel-

lectually and spiritually from the first principles they learned when they were first converted. It is in this context that he identifies those first principles, and then, exhorts them to grow beyond the foundation of these principles of milk to solid food. **Let us go on to perfection:** "*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18). "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God...*" (2 Tm 2:15). These exhortations fall on the shoulders of every Christian. Christians should be reviewing and remembering the first principles. However, unless there is intellectual and spiritual growth in one's life as a disciple, he becomes dull of hearing (5:11). Complacency and indifference in one's Christian life are the result of becoming dull of hearing. The result of complacency and indifference is what happened to the Hebrews. They were falling away from the faith because they failed to continue to grow. In order to guard against apostasy, therefore, one must grow. **Not laying again:** It seems that their lack of growth generated controversies over the first principles. Such is the result of the lack of growth in the life of a Christian. When one ceases to grow in his knowledge of the Scriptures, controversy often develops over the little knowledge one has of the Scriptures. In this case, the controversy was over the first teachings of the word of Christ. **Repentance from dead works:** These works were dead in that they were legalistically performed as meritorious deeds in an effort to merit one's salvation (9:14; see comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11). Those to whom the writer inscribes these thoughts were first converted out of Judaism which was a legalistic system of religion (See introduction to Gl). When converted to Christ, it would be probable that they would have brought into the church this system of legal religiosity, and thus, should have caused controversy over how and what one should obey in order to be saved (See comments At 15:1,2; Gl 2:1-5). **Faith toward God:** Their initial faith had led to their obedience of the gospel. However, one's initial faith in coming to Christ must grow beyond first principles (See 11:6; 12:2). If one's faith does not grow, then one becomes weak when the trials of living the Christian life test one's weak faith (See comments Mt 13:3-9,18-23). **Doctrine of immersions:** The word "baptisms" is plural, and thus, reference is here to more than one baptism. The Jews practiced a ceremonial baptism. In this context, reference could also be to John's baptism (Mk 1:3,4; At 19:1-6) in reference to baptism in the name of Jesus (At 2:38). Because these readers had not progressed beyond the first principles and debates that are discussed among new prospects and converts, they were still comparing the validity of other baptisms in reference to baptism in the name of Jesus. **Laying on of hands:** The laying on of the apostles' hands was a major event in the first century church. It was by the laying on of the apostles' hands that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted

4 ¶ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

to the early Christians (See comments At 8:18; 19:6; Rm 1:11; compare At 6:6; 8:17; 9:12,17). Once the Christ-sent apostles began scattering to the far ends of the world, or passing from this life, the opportunity to have hands laid on oneself was also passing away. It is worthy to note that the laying on of the apostles' hands is placed here in the context of first principles. In other words, the readers had to grow on from depending on the laying on of hands and the miraculous gifts. They must grow beyond the need for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. The miraculous gifts of the Spirit, therefore, were for the purpose of establishing the infant church. However, God never intended that such be a continuing work of the Spirit in the church in order that the church continue to grow (See comments 1 Co 13:8-12). The readers must focus on the word of God as it has already been revealed, not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. By the time this letter was written, the miraculous gifts were passing away (See comments 1 Co 13:8-10). **Resurrection of the dead:** The Thessalonian church had some concern over this subject (See comments 1 Th 4:13-17; see comments Jn 5:28,29; At 17:31; 1 Co 15:12-23; 2 Co 5:1-8). This event was yet in the future. Therefore, it would be natural for controversial discussions to occur over this subject among those who had not grown in knowledge of God's revelation. **Eternal judgment:** There would be a final judgment (At 24:25). The process of judging would not carry on throughout eternity. The judgment would be once and for all eternity. The use of the Greek word *aionios* ("eternal") here refers to the unending results of the judgment, not an unending process of judging. It is eternal judgment, therefore, in the sense that judgment will take place at one time, but the result of the judgment will last without end. **3** The writer here affirms that in this letter he will carry the readers beyond first principles. Without any discussion concerning the teachings that he has just mentioned in verses 1,2, he carries on to the solid food in the remainder of this letter.

WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY

4 Impossible ... to renew them again: In these few statements the writer reveals the devastating impact that apostasy has on the individual who turns from the grace of God. It is impossible to renew this one to repentance simply because he has experienced the greatest of what God has to offer, and yet, has turned away (See comments 2 Pt 2:20-22). It is impossible for him to repent simply because he does not want to repent. He is hardened to the appeal of God's grace (10:26; Mt 12:31). Herein is the picture of those Jews who were delivered from the futility of keeping law under the Old Testament system in order to experience the freedom that is in Christ (See comments Gl 5:1-6). This is the one who has turned from grace to law-keeping in order to save himself on the basis of his ability to perform law. He has rejected the blood of Christ in order to trust in his own ability to keep the Old Testament law. His efforts are futile, for by works of law no man shall be justified before God (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). **Once enlightened:** We must not miss the point that the writer here states that these apostates fully understood that from which they apostatized

(10:26,32; 2 Co 4:4-6). They were saved. However, they fell from the grace of God by their unbelief and disobedience. It is possible, therefore, for one to be saved, and yet, fall from his state of salvation. Salvation is dependent on one's continued obedience to the will of God. **Tasted of the heavenly gift:** They had experienced the grace of God through their personal obedience to the gospel (8:12; 10:17,32; Ep 1:3; 1 Pt 2:3). The gift of God's grace originated out of heaven (Ti 2:11; see comments Ep 2:1-10). They first turned to God's grace because they evidently recognized the futility of justification by works. However, they turned again unto a system of works. In doing such, they turned away from the grace of God that was revealed through the cross. The writer identified one reason why these apostates had turned away from the grace of God. It was because of their lack of intellectual and spiritual growth. However, there may have been some intimidation from some in the community who led them to turn from the best that God had to offer man for his problem of sin. For some reason these apostates turned from God's grace to seek justification through the Old Testament system of law. **Partakers of the Holy Spirit:** Some of these had certainly had hands laid on them in order to receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (See comments At 8:18-24). However, the fact that they possessed the miraculous gifts of the Spirit did not guarantee their spiritual growth. The Spirit did not subjectively work so as to control the spiritual growth of an individual. One spiritually grows intellectually and spiritually when he submits his heart to the direction of the Spirit's work through the word of God. It is this word that has been completed and recorded for men of all history (2 Tm 3:16,17; Jd 3). If the Spirit is responsible for one's individual spiritual growth, then certainly in this case of apostasy under discussion, the Spirit failed. The point is that neither the miraculous possession and manifestation of the Holy Spirit, nor the indwelling of the Spirit, guarantee one's salvation. In this case, as well as the case of the Galatians (See comments Gl 3:2-5), the Holy Spirit is not responsible for the security of the believer in the faith. If one falls from the grace of God because of disobedience, he will be held accountable for such in the day of judgment. **5 Powers of the age to come:** The "age to come" to the Jews was the messianic age. The writer could here be using this phrase from a past Jewish perspective, and thus, would have been referring to the age in which he and the readers were in at the time of writing. The powers of the Christian dispensation in which they lived, therefore, would have been manifested through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. However, the writer could have been referring to the new heavens and earth that is yet to come (2 Pt 3:13). The experience of the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the Hebrews was an indication of the supernatural environment of heaven that is to come. In other words, they experienced the reality of the miraculous working of God. They had factual evidence of the existence and work of God because God worked directly in their lives through the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. They walked by fact. However, they turned away from God's factual evidence of the age that is to come. They turned away from the direct revelation of God. As

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put *Him* to open shame.

7 ¶ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and brings forth herbs useful for those by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God.

8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

9 ¶ But, beloved, we are confident of better

things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

10 For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love that you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and still *are* ministering.

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end,

12 so that you not be sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

their forefathers who wanted to turn back to Egypt after experiencing the miraculous work of God through the plagues of Egypt and the dividing of the Red Sea, these apostates have rejected the miraculous manifestation of God. They were thus without excuse. **6 If they fall away:** The subjunctive indicates that at least some of these readers were on the verge of giving up that which they first received through the gospel. They had not yet fallen, and thus, there was still hope. The writer wrote in the past tense in verses 4,5 in order to declare the hopelessness of those who would make the choice of turning from Jesus. Some had evidently fallen. There were some on the verge of falling. He wrote in order to exhort those who are on the verge of falling to remain faithful (vs 9). **They crucify to themselves the Son of God:** Apostates from Christ again hold up Jesus before a world that mocked Him on the cross. They give occasion for the unbelieving world to mock the church, the body of Christ (Cl 1:18). They bring shame upon the name of Jesus and His body.

7 The earth which drinks: This agricultural metaphor illustrates that the land (the Christian) that drinks the rain (God's grace) will produce fruit. The fruit (Christian growth and influence) is useful to those who partake of it (See Mt 5:13). The Christian life is of benefit to the world as long as the principles of Jesus permeate the behavior of the believer. **8 But if it bears thorns:** If one forsakes the grace of God, he will produce thorns and briars. His life will be as salt that has lost its saltiness, and thus, is good for nothing in reference to the kingdom of God. The apostate will thus be cast out and burned (See 12:29; Mt 13:24-30;36-43; Jn 15:6; see comments 2 Th 1:7-9).

CERTAINTY OF GOD'S PROMISES

9 Better things concerning you: Though the readers were on the verge of apostasy, they had not yet fallen from grace as others had who were described in verses 4-6. The writer wants to reassure his readers that they were not of the nature of the apostates who had already fallen. They were of a disposition of growth because they had not hardened their hearts against the instructions of God. Since they were of such a nature, the writer expects them to grow on from where they were. **Accompany salvation:** Salvation comes from responding to the grace of God. In this response, one works abundantly beyond those things which he did while he

was motivated by a legal view of law and good works (See comments 1 Co 15:10). When one is motivated to be saved by a legal effort to keep a supposed check list of requirements, he will struggle to keep the list. His outward performance may be satisfied, but his inward growth will continue only insofar as he has performed what he believes to be the required performance of his religious codes. He will fall into the trap of simply accomplishing the required performances of his religion without concentration on the inward spiritual growth of his heart. On the other hand, the one who is motivated by an inward appreciation for his salvation by God's grace will continue to respond because of his gratitude for his salvation (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). Serving God will not be a burdensome effort of keeping commandments in order to merit one's salvation (1 Jn 5:3). Keeping God's commandments will be the joyful experience of an obedient son following a loving Father (See comments Rm 3:31). There is no limit to the spiritual growth of this person because his response comes from the heart and not by the satisfaction of accomplishing a legal outward performance of codes and regulations. His response thus grows as his knowledge of God's grace grows (See comments 2 Pt 3:18). **10 Ministered ... still are ministering:** These readers had been faithful in ministering to the saints. They had proved their faithfulness in the past. In such ministry, they were ministering in the name of God. Their work and labor was the result of their love of God (10:32-34; Rm 15:25; 2 Co 8:4; 1 Th 1:3; 2 Tm 1:18). God would not discount the manifestation of their love of Him through their ministry to the saints (See Rm 3:4; 2 Th 1:6,7). **11 The same diligence:** The exhortation here is that Christians be diligent (5:11; 2 Tm 2:15; 2 Pt 1:10). They must not be lazy in their response to the love of God (1 Jn 4:19). In order to make their calling and election sure, they must remain diligent unto the end of their lives (Rv 2:10). Their diligence is not as one who would accumulate meritorious points in order to win a prize. The good works that a Christian does are not to be considered an accumulation of points by which he would put God in debt to save him (See comments Rm 4:1-4; 11:6). The good works are the manifestation of one's continued thanksgiving for his salvation (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). If one does not continue to be diligent, therefore, he has discontinued his appreciation for what God has accomplished for him through the cross. **12 Through faith and pa-**

13 ¶ For when God made *the* promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, “*Surely blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you.*”

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

16 For indeed men swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all dispute.

17 Therefore, God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath,

18 so that by two unchangeable things in which *it is* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 ¶ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the

soul, both sure and steadfast and which enters within the veil,

20 where Jesus, the forerunner, has entered for us, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Chapter 7

1 ¶ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth of everything, first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is, king of peace,

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

4 ¶ Now consider how great this man *was*, to

tience: Because of the hope that is before Christians, and the love expressed to them by God in the past, Christians are not lazy, but diligent workers. Their faith is active because of their hope (See comments ch 11; Js 2:14-26). Through obedient faith, therefore, they will inherit the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the rest that is yet to come (See comments Ph 2:12,13).

SURE AND STEADFAST HOPE

13,14 Promise to Abraham: No greater surety could be made of a promise than God Himself. And so, on the basis of who He is, God promised Abraham that He would make a great nation of his seed (See Gn 12:1-3; 13:15; 15:5; 17:4-8; 22:16,17; Lk 1:73). **15 Patiently endured:** Abraham did not live to see the nation of Israel develop from his seed. However, he did live long enough to see the fulfillment of the promise being carried out by the birth of his son Isaac (See comments Rm 4:20,21). **16** In matters of disagreement among the Jews, an oath was given by both parties. The giving of the oath ended the disagreement (Compare Gn 14:22; 21:23ff; Ex 22:11). **17 Confirmed it by an oath:** The word “confirmed” could be translated “guaranteed.” In order to show His unchangeable promise which He gave to Abraham in the past, God guaranteed the promise with His oath. **18,19 Two unchangeable things:** The two unchangeable things upon which Christians are given hope are the promise of God which He swears upon Himself and His oath that He will bring about the promise. **Impossible for God to lie:** God's promises cannot be changed because they come from the One who cannot lie (Nm 23:19; 1 Sm 15:29; Ti 1:2). God cannot lie, neither has He ever broken an oath. The Christian's hope, therefore, cannot be changed. **Strong encouragement:** The Christian can have peace of mind because the promised rest that is yet to come is based on the unchangeable promise of God. The Christian's hope, therefore, is certain (3:6; 7:19; 12:1; see Rm

8:24,25; Ph 3:13,14). **Enters within the veil:** The high priest of Israel entered behind the veil into the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement in order to bring gifts and sacrifices to God for the sins of himself and the nation (See 9:3,7; Lv 16:2,15). **20** As our High Priest (3:1; 5:6,10; 7:17), Jesus has entered into heaven on our behalf (See Jn 14:2; Hb 4:14; 8:1; 9:24). He has gone on before us, and thus, it is assumed that we will follow. **Order of Melchizedek:** The writer now introduces comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek. Jesus is our high priest according to the order of Melchizedek who was a Gentile priest and king during the days of Abraham (See 3:1; 5:10,11; Gn 14:17-19; Ps 110:4). In reference to the records of the Jews, there is no recorded beginning and ending of the priesthood and kingship of Melchizedek. The record of his life, therefore, is the illustration the writer introduces to affirm that Jesus is after the order of his priesthood and kingship.

Chapter 7

THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

1-3 Melchizedek: The writer here uses the unrecorded beginning and ending of the international priesthood of Melchizedek in the life of Abraham as an illustration of the unending priesthood of Jesus (See 5:6; 6:20; Gn 14:18-20). As Jesus, Melchizedek was a priest and king. **Without father ... mother ... genealogy:** There is no record of the beginning or ending of the life and priesthood of Melchizedek. He was a Gentile who served as a priest and king in the city of Salem, though he was a priest to all people, including Abraham. Contrary to the necessity of Levitical priests proving their genealogy from Aaron with written records in order to qualify to be a priest, Melchizedek was designated a priest directly from God (See Lv 21). In this manner, Jesus was also appointed a priest directly from God. **4** In the preceding statements, the writer established the

whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.

5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they come from the loins of Abraham.

6 But he whose genealogy is not traced from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

7 And without all dispute the lesser is blessed by the better.

8 Now here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives tithes*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

9 And, so to speak, even Levi who receives

tithes paid tithes through Abraham,

10 for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

11 ¶ Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

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

13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, of which no one has officiated at the altar.

14 ¶ For *it is* evident that our Lord descended from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

greatness of Melchizedek's international priesthood. Since he has associated Melchizedek's priesthood with the priesthood of Jesus, he has thus exalted the priesthood of Jesus. In the following statements he manifests the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus over the Levitical priesthood, and thus, exalts the priesthood of Jesus above the Levitical priests. **Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils:** Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation. As the father of the nation of Israel, however, he exalted the international priesthood of Melchizedek by voluntarily paying tithes to Melchizedek. Through the paying of these tithes, Abraham showed honor to Melchizedek, and thus, manifested the greatness of his priesthood for all nations. It is significant to note that the law to tithe did not become written until the Old Testament law was given at Mount Sinai (Nm 18:21-28; Dt 14:28,29; 26:12-15). Abraham thus paid the tithe before it was a written commandment of God. Though we could assume that the tithe was given as a law before the giving of the Old Testament law, the fact remains that Abraham voluntarily paid the tithe to Melchizedek because Melchizedek was a priest of God. **5,6 Blessed him who had the promises:** The promises of God were made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; 13:15; 15:5; 17:4-8). However, Melchizedek was greater than Abraham because he received the tithes from Abraham. **7-9 Melchizedek was greater in that he could give a blessing to Abraham who was lesser.** In this way, therefore, the Levitical priests who came from Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham their father. **He lives:** There is no record in the Bible that Melchizedek died, though in reality he did. The writer here uses the lack of information on the beginning and ending of Melchizedek as an illustration of Jesus who had no beginning and lives on into eternity (5:6; 6:20). By contrasting the Levitical priests who die in order to give way to priests who follow, Jesus' priesthood lives on. Because it continues, it is greater than the Levitical priesthood.

hood: This verse is a question that demands the answer that there was no perfection through the Levitical priesthood. Under the Old Testament system of sacrifices and priesthood intervention on behalf of the people, there was no justification before God. First, there was no justification because it was impossible for men to keep law so as to justify themselves before God (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16,21; 3:11). Second, there was no justification because it was impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins (10:1-4). The answer to the question of this verse, therefore, was known by those who lived under the law (See comments Gl 2:14-21). They knew that there was no justification by works of the law and animal sacrifices. **12,13 The priesthood being changed:** Since there was no justification through the work of the Levitical priesthood in and of itself, there had to be a change in the priesthood. But before there could be a change in the priesthood, there had to be a change in the law. **Change of the law:** The priesthood has now been changed from the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament law to the priesthood of Jesus under the New Testament law. In this change, therefore, there was a change in the law, for only those of the tribe of Levi could be priests under the Old Testament law. **Belongs to another tribe:** Jesus was of the tribe of Judah (Gn 49:10; Is 11:1-5; Mc 5:2; Mt 2:1-6; At 2:23ff; 13:23; Rm 1:3; Rv 5:5). Since He was of the tribe of Judah, He could not function as a high priest under the Old Testament law. For this reason, the One who gave the law in the first place changed it for the purpose of bringing in Jesus as our high priest. We must not miss the point here that those who now live under the priesthood of Jesus now live under a new law. They are not under the Old Testament law that was given to Israel. They now live under the New Testament law of Christ (See comments Rm 7:1-4). **14 Spoke nothing concerning priesthood:** Herein is an argument from the silence of the Scriptures. The Old Testament law did not contain a negative commandment that condemned priests from coming from the other eleven tribes of Israel. The commandment was simply given that priests must come from the tribe of Levi. This stated

INTERNATIONAL PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

11 *If perfection were through the Levitical priest-*

15 And it is yet far more evident if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,

16 who is made, not according to the law of a carnal commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

17 For He testifies, “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*”

18 ¶ For on the one hand, there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,

19 for the law made nothing perfect. But on the other hand, there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

20 ¶ And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath,

21 (for those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath by Him who said to Him, “*The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’*”),

22 by so much was Jesus made a guarantee of a better covenant.

23 ¶ And there were many of those priests because they were prevented by death from continuing.

24 But this *One*, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

commandment, therefore, condemned priests coming from any other tribe. The specific commandment was the authority against originating priests from any other tribe. The specific commandment was silent in reference to priests originating from other tribes. This silence was a commandment against any priest coming from any tribe other than the tribe of Levi. For this reason, the law had to be changed in order to allow Jesus to be our high priest. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah. Therefore, He could not be a priest while the Old Testament law was still in force. **15-17** Jesus cannot be a priest after the order of the Levitical priests. He must be after the order of Melchizedek. The Old Testament priesthood was mortal and found its authority for existence in the law of the Old Testament. On the other hand, the priesthood of Jesus is after that of Melchizedek, and thus, is without end. Because of His resurrection from the dead, Jesus' priesthood now lives on in contrast to the mortality of the Levitical priests (vs 24). The priesthood of Jesus was not nationally bound to one nation as the Levitical priesthood. It was after the order of Melchizedek who was a priest to all, even Abraham. Jesus' priesthood, therefore, is international, not national. **18,19** **Annuling of the former commandment:** Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament law (Mt 5:17,18). However, once the law was fulfilled, it was taken away (10:9,10). This statement clearly means that for the Christian, the Old Testament law has accomplished its purpose, and thus, is no longer binding. It has been taken away in order that Jesus be our high priest. **The law made nothing perfect:** “*Therefore by the deeds of law no flesh will be justified in His sight ...*” (Rm 3:20; see comments Gl 2:16). The law made no one perfect before God, and thus did not justify one of sin. This was true simply because no one could keep it perfectly (9:9; 10:1; see At 13:39; Rm 7:7; Gl 3:11,21). It is impossible for one to keep law perfectly so as to justify himself before God. In other words, one cannot keep law perfectly so as to place God in debt to reward one with eternal life. All sin and fall short of entering the glory of God (Rm 3:23). The wages of just one sin is death (Rm 6:23). Therefore, by keeping law in and of itself, no one can be justified before God. **A better hope:** Since the Old Testament law in and of itself could not justify because no one could keep it perfectly, God brought in grace through Jesus Christ (Ti 2:11). “*For*

the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:17). Through the grace of God that was manifested through the cross, therefore, we have a better hope (6:18,19). It is a better hope because it is founded upon the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus. Therefore, through the greater revelation of the work of God through Jesus, we have a better hope than those who lived in the shadow of revelation until the revelation of Jesus (See 1 Pt 1:10-12). Because of this better hope, we are drawn to God and His precious possession which He has for all the faithful (See 4:16; Lm 3:57; Rm 5:2; Ep 2:18; 1 Pt 2:5,9; Js 4:8; Rv 1:6).

20,21 **Not without an oath:** God swore by oath upon the basis of His existence as God that Jesus would be and now is our high priest (See 6:13-18; Ps 110:4). Under the Old Testament law one was born into the family of priests simply by being born a Levite. He was a priest by birth, not by oath. However, Jesus has been made a priest by the oath of God. He was not born into the priesthood by being born into a Levite family, for He was of the tribe of Judah. **22** **Guarantee of a better covenant:** The covenant is better because it is based on the oath of God that Jesus continues forever as our high priest (8:6; 2 Co 3:6). Since God has sworn with an oath that Jesus is our eternal high priest, then Jesus has become the guarantee of the new covenant. The old covenant passed away as it gave way to the new. However, the new covenant will never give way to another for Jesus is a priest forever after the international order of Melchizedek. It was the purpose of the Old Testament covenant that God made with Israel to bring Israel to the new covenant in Christ. This is the final covenant that God will make with man on earth.

23 In contrast to the international and eternal priesthood of Jesus, the Old Testament priests could not serve without end. Physical death brought an end to their service as priests. On the other hand, Jesus' priesthood continues on because He lives on. **24** **Unchangeable priesthood:** Because Jesus has been designated a priest forever, His priesthood will not change. It will not be terminated by physical death (vss 16,17). **25** **Save those to the uttermost:** Because of His eternal priesthood, Jesus can do what the Old Testament priesthood could not do. He can function on behalf of Christians as their priestly intercessor throughout eternity

25 Therefore, He is able also to save those to the uttermost who come to God through Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.

26 ¶ For such a high priest was appropriate for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and exalted above the heavens,

27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

28 For the law appoints men *as* high priests who have weakness, but the word of the oath which came after the law, *appoints* the Son

who has been perfected forever.

Chapter 8

1 ¶ Now the main point concerning the things we have spoken *is this*: We have such a high priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

2 a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle that the Lord pitched, and not man.

3 ¶ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Therefore, *it is* necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer.

4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer gifts

(9:24; Rm 8:34; 1 Tm 2:5; compare 1 Jn 2:1). Our salvation to the uttermost, therefore, refers to salvation without end because Jesus serves as our high priest without end (Compare Jd 24).

JESUS IS AN APPROPRIATE HIGH PRIEST

26 Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate ... exalted: In contrast to the Old Testament priests, Jesus lived on earth in a sinless manner in reference to the law (4:15). He does not work against us, but is the gentle Savior who pleads that all come unto Him (Mt 11:28-30). He was not corrupted or polluted by the world. And in contrast to the Levitical priests, He has ascended to reign over all things (1:3; 4:14; 8:1; 9:28; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). He is our high priest who now has control of all things. **27 Once for all when He offered up Himself:** The Levitical priests were obligated according to the law to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people as well as for their own sins (Lv 9:7; 16:6-15). They had to offer these sacrifices year after year since it was impossible for the sacrifices of animals to take away sins (10:1-4). On the other hand, Jesus made one sacrifice for sin at one point in history. The sufficiency of His sacrifice was manifested in the fact that He did not have to make another sacrifice. The Greek word which is here translated "once for all" is used eleven times in this letter in reference to the sacrifice of Jesus. It conveys the meaning that the sacrifice of Jesus was both perfect and sufficient, and thus, qualified to atone for the sins of all humanity for all time (Rm 6:10). It was a sacrifice that will never have to be offered again. **28 Weakness:** The commandment of the Old Testament law designated priests who were not able to live sinless lives (5:1,2; Rm 3:9,10,23). On the other hand, through His oath, God appointed Jesus, who is sinless (4:15), to be our priest forever. He has been perfected through His obedience (5:8,9). He has been perfected through His suffering (2:10; see comments Rv 5). He is thus a sufficient sacrifice that continues to be our mediator (1 Tm 2:5), intercessor (Rm 8:34) and advocate (1 Jn 2:1).

Chapter 8

THE NEW AND BETTER COVENANT

1,2 The main point: This could either be the theme

of the letter or the main point of the writer's argument concerning the priesthood of Jesus, or both. What is stated here is certainly an all-encompassing concept concerning the present work of Jesus on behalf of all Christians. Jesus has ascended to the right hand of God and is now reigning as priest and king over all things (See Ps 68:18; 110:1; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:9-11; Cl 3:1; 1 Pt 3:22). The metaphors "right hand" and "throne" signify that Jesus is in the position of all authority, and thus, functions as our high priest (See Mt 28:18). Because Jesus accomplished His sacrificial work on the cross, He is now seated in a position of authority where He can continue the function of high priest. He thus ministers in the Holy of Holies of the sanctuary of the tabernacle of God in heaven (9:8,12). No earthly Levitical priest can compare with what Jesus has done and is now doing on behalf of Christians. **The true tabernacle:** The tabernacle of the Old Testament was physical and of this world. It was only a shadow of the tabernacle of the hearts of those who have now submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus (9:11,12,24). The substance of the shadow is the church of submitted hearts who have given themselves to the lordship of Jesus (Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). This is the tabernacle that Jesus built upon the foundation of His sonship and messiahship (See comments Mt 16:18,19; 1 Pt 2,5,9). **3 Gifts and sacrifices:** The Levitical priests were designated by God to offer gifts and sacrifices on behalf of the sins of the people. Jesus has now offered Himself as the gift and sacrifice for our sins (5:1; compare Rm 4:25; 5:6,8; Gl 2:20; Ep 5:2). **4 If ... on earth, He would not be a priest:** Those who functioned on earth as priests had to be born of the tribe of Levi (Nm 18:1-7). However, Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah (7:13,14). Therefore, if Jesus were on earth or were ever to come to this earth, He could not function as our high priest. We would assume, therefore, that since Jesus' priesthood is eternal in the heavens after the order of Melchizedek, He never intends to return to this earth. If He comes to this earth, He will have to give up His priesthood. We can thus be assured that Jesus will never set foot on this earth again for the very reason that the Hebrew writer states here in his argument that Jesus will eternally function as our high priest in heaven. **5 A copy and shadow:** The Old Testament tabernacle and priesthood were of

according to the law.

5 They serve a copy and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was warned when he was about to make the tabernacle. “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant that was established on better promises.

7 ¶ For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, He says, “Be-

hold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in My covenant and I turned away from them, says the Lord.

10 *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 mind and write them on their hearts. And I will be to them a God and they will be to Me a people.*

this world. They were temporary. However, they did function as earthly illustrations of something that is greater than this world. They were patterned after the true and present spiritual tabernacle of the church of God's people and the high priest work of Jesus in heaven (See 9:23,24; Cl 2:17). We are thus to seek after that from which the copy was made. We are to seek the substance of the shadow. If the readers returned to the copy and shadow, they would give up the true pattern from which the copy was made and the substance from which the shadow was cast. **All things according to the pattern:** The tent, or tabernacle, of the wilderness wanderings of Israel was to be constructed exactly as God prescribed. It was to be built according to God's instructions because it was the type of the spiritual tabernacle that was yet to come in the history of Israel but was already in the mind of God (See Ex 25:9,40; 26:30; 27:8; Nm 8:4; At 7:44). If the work in construction of the tabernacle would be an illustration for us today, then we should follow carefully the instructions by which God has constructed things after the order of His work in building the church. The church, therefore, was not built after the invention of men in the first century. It was in the mind of God from the creation of the world (See comments Ep 1:3-14; 3:8-11). From this foreordained plan of God, therefore, preparation was made through the construction of the physical tabernacle in order to prepare the minds of Israel for accepting Jesus and His church. **6 Better covenant ... better promises:** Jesus now carries on with a more excellent ministry because He functions as our high priest from heaven (vss 1,2; compare 2 Co 3:6-8). He now stands as a mediator between God and man (Gl 3:19; 1 Tm 2:5), and thus, administers reconciliation in bringing man to God (9:15; 12:24). In this way, therefore, Christians are in a better covenant relationship with God (7:22; Lk 22:20). And since Christians are in a better covenant relationship with God, they have a better hope that is based on a better priesthood (10:35,36; Ti 1:2; Rv 13:14). All that the Christian has is better than the Old Testament law and covenant. For this reason, the writer argues that it would be theologically detrimental to return to an inferior law and covenant.

of the second covenant manifested the weakness of those who lived under the first. The first was weak in that it had an inferior priesthood in comparison to Jesus who is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (7:11,18). But here the fault is identified not to be with the covenant, but with those who were placed in subjection to the law of the covenant. The problem was with man, not the covenant or the law. It is impossible for one to keep law perfectly so as to save himself (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11). The weakness of the Old Testament law and covenant, therefore, was in the man who could not live perfectly under law. The Old Testament law and covenant were adequate for the purposes for which they were intended. The law gave Israel direction concerning what God would have them do. However, the law was never meant to be a means in and of itself for the justification of man. No law of God is ever meant in and of itself to justify man (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Therefore, the Old Testament law was never meant to be God's final law to man. For this reason, God promised Israel a new covenant that had new conditions. It was to be a covenant of grace and truth (See Jn 1:17). **A new covenant:** God had established a covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. With the covenant came conditions. The conditions were the laws of the Old Testament. The problem with the old covenant, therefore, was that the conditions were violated by those to whom the covenant was given. The Israelites sinned, and thus, they broke the conditions for keeping the covenant. Nevertheless, God promised that He would establish with them a new covenant (See Jr 31:31-34). **House of Israel and ... Judah:** In the context of Jeremiah when the prophecy of the new covenant was made, God was addressing the promise of Jeremiah 31 to the twelve tribes of Israel. He thus made the promise to the nation of Israel. However, in the fulfillment of the promise, the new covenant extended beyond the nation of Israel. It extended to all nations (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:16). The Gentiles were included in the new covenant relationship that God established with all mankind. **10-12 I will put My laws in their mind and ... hearts:** In the prophecy of Jeremiah 31, God explained that the nature of the new covenant would be different than the old covenant. The Old Testament covenant was national in the sense that it did not demand prior commitment before

THE BETTER COVENANT

7-9 Finding fault with them: The establishment

11 *And they will not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them.*

12 *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."*

13 ¶ In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now that which is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Chapter 9

1 ¶ Then indeed the first *covenant* also had

ordinances of divine service and an earthly sanctuary.

2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first *part*, in which *were* the lampstand and the table and the showbread, that is called the sanctuary.

3 And behind the second veil, *the part of* the tabernacle that is called the Holy of Holies,

4 that had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.

5 And over it *were* the cherubim of glory

one came into covenant relationship with God. It was a covenant with the nation of Israel, and thus, when one was physically born a Jew he automatically came into covenant relationship with God as a Jew. From the time he could be taught as a child, he was taught the conditions (the law) of the covenant while in covenant relationship with God (See Is 54:12-15; Jn 6:44,45). However, in contrast to the nature of the Old Testament covenant relationship God had with the nation of Israel, the new covenant was to be different. Under the new covenant, when one is born into the new covenant relationship he has already been taught the law of God. He has been taught the conditions for establishing a covenant relationship, and thus, through immersion for the remission of sins one voluntarily joins in covenant relationship through the new birth (Jn 3:3-5; Rm 6:3-6). Therefore, under the new covenant one has been taught the terms of agreement for keeping the covenant before he comes into covenant relationship with God. In this sense, the law of God is already in his heart and mind before he comes into the new covenant. He already knows God through his knowledge of the gospel. It is the result of his knowledge of God that he obeys the gospel in order to establish a covenant relationship with God. It is for this reason that baptism is for those who can comprehend the conditions of the new covenant. ***Their sins ... I will remember no more:*** Under the new covenant the grace of God is manifested through His mercy toward our sins (Rm 5:1,2; 11:27; Ep 2:1-8). In view of the inadequacy of the sacrifice of animals under the old covenant, the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus washes away all sins (9:9; 10:1-3,11). Under the new covenant we have the knowledge of the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus (Ti 2:11,14). We have the assurance through the blood of Jesus that God remembers our sins no more. In contrast to the old covenant wherein the nation of Israel had to give account as a nation for the violation of the terms of the covenant, under the new covenant individuals are forgiven through the grace of God upon the basis of individual repentance (See comments 1 Jn 1:7-9). **13** When the promise of Jeremiah 31:31-34 was made, the old covenant was in the process of vanishing away. It vanished when Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament law of the covenant (Mt 5:17,18). When Jesus died on the cross, the Old Testament law and covenant were annulled (9:16,17; Rm 7:4; Cl 2:14).

Christians now live under a new covenant relationship with God that contains new conditions for remaining faithful to the covenant. ***Is becoming obsolete:*** The present tense of the verb here indicates that reference to the vanishing of the old was in a process of going away. The Old Testament law was nailed to the cross. However, the Levitical system was carrying on in the sense that there were Levitical priests continuing to carry out their duties at the temple in Jerusalem (vs 4). The writer seems to indicate in this verse that there is an imminent end wherein the old will have finally terminated. That imminent end was in the near future in that the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and temple which was about to occur (See comments Mt 24). In the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, the temple service was terminated by the work of God to close the Old Testament system of sacrifices. As God had given the Canaanites forty years as an opportunity for repentance during the wilderness wanderings of Israel, He was now giving Israel forty years as an opportunity for repentance from A.D. 30 to A.D. 70.

Chapter 9

THE SHADOW AND THE SUBSTANCE

The writer now proceeds to explain the inadequacies of the Old Testament covenant and its laws. At the time of his writing, this covenant with its law had passed away. Jewish Christians were dead to the law of the Old Testament through their obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 7:1-4). They were now under a new law in their new covenant with God through Jesus Christ. **1 *The first:*** The first covenant contained laws of service. Under this covenant there was also the institution of the earthly tabernacle (Ex 25,26; see Hb 8:2; 9:11,24). **2** In the sanctuary, or Holy Place of the tabernacle, there was the lampstand (golden candlestick), the altar of incense, and a table with unleavened showbread upon it. **3-5 *Second veil:*** Between the Holy Place (the sanctuary) and the Most Holy Place was the second veil (Ex 26:31-35; 40:3). In the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies) was the ark of the covenant in which were the tables of stone commandments that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai (Ex 25:16; 34:29; Dt 10:2-5) and the rod of Aaron that budded (See Ex

overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6 ¶ Now when these things had been so prepared, the priests went continually into the first tabernacle performing the service.

7 But into the second, only the high priest *entered* once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the sins of the people *committed* in ignorance.

8 The Holy Spirit *is* signifying this, that the way into the holy place was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still

standing.

9 *It was* a symbol for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience,

10 *since they relate* only to foods and drinks and various washings and carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

11 ¶ But Christ appeared *as* a high priest of good things to come, with a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation.

16:33,34; Nm 17:1-10). The top of the ark of the covenant was called the mercy seat. Overshadowing the mercy seat were winged cherubim (Ex 25:17,20; Lv 16:2; 1 Kg 8:7). **Cannot now speak in detail:** It was not the writer's purpose to go into great detail concerning a description of the physical tabernacle. He is introducing the subject only for the purpose of illustrating the following point. Though the Jews took great pride in the physical structure and arrangement of the tabernacle which they copied in the building of the temple, God placed no emphasis on such in reference to worship and service of Him (See comments At 17:24-28).

6 After the construction of the tabernacle, the priests administered their service on behalf of the people in the sanctuary (Holy Place) of the tabernacle (Nm 18:2-6; 28:3). **7 High priest:** The high priest was the only priest who was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place). Though the priests entered daily into the Holy Place, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies only once a year on the day of atonement (10:3; Ex 30:10; Lv 16:34). At least three times on this day of atonement, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with sacrifices that he would offer on behalf of himself and the people. **Not without blood:** The sufficient blood sacrifice of Jesus is now introduced in this letter. Throughout the remainder of the letter, the writer will contrast the blood of animals with the blood of Jesus in reference to the forgiveness of sins. **8** Through the tabernacle, God was illustrating a truth. While the tabernacle was in force as God's instituted structure on earth for Israel, the way into heaven (the Holiest of All) was not clearly known. The way to heaven was not clearly revealed through the Old Testament law. **9 Symbolic for the present time:** The Old Testament system of the law and tabernacle were meant to illustrate that which was coming. When Christ came, then was made known that which the law and tabernacle illustrated. The way to heaven was made known only in Christ (10:19,20). The veil into heaven thus remained while the Old Testament system remained in force. **Cannot make ... perfect:** One could not be perfected under the law for two reasons. First, he could not keep the law perfectly so as to justify himself before God (7:19; see comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16,21; 3:11). Second, because he sinned he was separated from God (Is 59:1,2). A sacrifice for sin was demanded, but it was impossible for the blood of animals to atone for sin (10:1-4). Therefore, there was no salvation through the keeping of the law for the law in and of itself brought sin and death.

Gifts: These represented the efforts of the worshipers to pay for their sins. **Sacrifices:** These represented the efforts of the worshipers to atone for their sins with animal blood. The problem was that no man could give enough gifts in order to buy his salvation. No amount of animal blood could ever atone for any sin between man and God. Therefore, under the Old Testament system, it was futile to be saved by obedience to the law in and of itself. This is the case with any law. The problem is not with the law, but with men who are unable to keep law perfectly so as to live without sin before God. **In regard to the conscience:** The worshipers under the Old Testament law knew all the truths the writer here has just stated. They knew there was no justification before God on the basis of human effort and animal blood (See comments Gl 2:15-21). **10** Though the worshipers knew the futility of the ordinances, they knew that they needed to keep the ordinances in obedience to God's law. God had instituted the ordinances in order to offer man God-ordained actions by which the worshipers could manifest their faith. **The time of reformation:** We are now living in the time of reformation. In contrast to the external offering of ceremonial actions under the law, Christians have now been restored to offering themselves in body and mind as living sacrifices to God in response to His grace (Rm 12:1,2). The ceremonial ordinances of the law concentrated on the outward performance of the worshipers (See Lv 10:9; 11; 16:4,24; Nm 8:6,7; 19:7; Dt 14:3-21). However, in this time of reformation, concentration is to be on the heart (1 Pt 3:4). One reason why God instituted the ceremonial performances of the law was to drive man to accept the New Testament law and covenant. The old law was outward and oriented toward ceremonial performance. The new law is inward through the giving of one's heart to the Lord. Once one realized the futility of the outward performance of ordinances, he would be driven to fulfilling inward dedication of the heart under the law of Christ. One must be careful, therefore, not to view the New Testament law of Christ after the manner by which the Jews were to keep the Old Testament law.

A CLEARED CONSCIENCE IN CHRIST

11 But Christ appeared: If one recognized the futility of the Old Testament system, he struggled for relief from the insufficiency of ceremonial performances and the inadequacies of animal sacrifices. When grace and truth were revealed through Christ (Jn 1:17), those honest Jews who recognized the futility of the Old Tes-

12 Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

14 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?

15 And for this reason He is the mediator of the new covenant, so that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 ¶ For where a covenant *is*, the death of the one who made it must be established.

17 For a covenant *is* ratified upon death, since it has no force while the one who made it lives.

18 Therefore, not even the first *covenant* was

tament law system fled to Christ (See comments Gl 2:15-21). **A greater and more perfect tabernacle:** Good things came with Jesus. He brought a spiritual tabernacle as opposed to the physical tabernacle of the Old Testament. He brought the church which is the community of those who have come into covenant relationship with God through Jesus (8:2; Mt 16:18). He brought His international and eternal high priesthood in order to function as a high priest forever on behalf of the church (ch 7). He brought the sufficient sacrifice of His blood offering in order to continually cleanse the sins of the saints of God (At 20:28; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14; 1 Jn 1:7-9). He brought the hope of eternal heaven to all those who through faith trust in the grace of God (6:18,19). He thus brought eternal redemption to all throughout the world who would come to Him and into Him through belief and immersion for remission of sins (Mk 10:45; Ti 1:2; see comments Ep 1:3-11). **12 Once for all:** As opposed to the blood of animals, Jesus offered His own incarnate blood for the sins of those who draw near (Is 53:12; Ep 1:7). Jesus came to the Father in heaven with His own blood, not with the blood of animals. **Eternal redemption:** The effects of the action of redemption by His blood was "eternal" (*aionios*). The Greek word *aionios* which is used here does not mean that the offering continued on without end. Jesus died on the cross only one time. What is emphasized is the effect of the offering that took place "once for all" time. It is "*aionios*" (eternal) redemption in the sense that the redemption (the effect) carries on without end because of a one time offering of Jesus on the cross. The definition of *aionios* is in the writer's argument for the sufficiency of the sacrificial action of the cross. It was so sufficient that Jesus did not have to continue to offer Himself. He offered Himself once and that was enough for all time on this earth and the unending existence of heaven which is to come (See vss 25,28). **13,14** The writer asks a question that has an obvious answer. The blood of offered animals reminded the sinner of his sins, and thus, would encourage him not to sin again. However, he still had to deal with the cleansing of his conscience. The writer's argument is that the blood of Jesus cleanses both the sin in reference to one's relationship with God, as well as his own conscience. Therefore, the writer's conclusion is that the blood sacrifice of Jesus is more effective (1 Jn 1:7). **Eternal Spirit:** In contrast to the temporal sacrifices of the law, Jesus' sacrifice has unending effect because of His unending existence. **Dead works:** The works were dead because they would

not atone for sins. No matter how many good works one may accumulate, such works will not atone for one sin nor make a just payment for the reward of eternal heaven (6:1; At 14:15; 1 Th 1:9). Therefore, works are dead in service to God simply because they cannot bring forgiveness of sins. They cannot because our eternal redemption is not based on our works, but on the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus (See comments Ep 2:1-10). **15 Mediator of the new covenant:** Through His sacrifice Jesus became the only mediator between God and man under the new covenant (8:6; 1 Tm 2:5). **For the redemption of the transgressions committed under the first:** Not only did Jesus offer sacrifice for the sins of those who have lived this side of the cross, the cleansing power of His blood also sanctified those who lived by faith before the cross. All people of all history are justified by the grace of the cross (See comments Rm 3:25). In reference to our confinement to time, the sins of the Old Testament era were passed over until the cross. However, in reference to God who sees and knows all things, sins were immediately forgiven upon the basis of repentance because of the cross that was yet in the future to those who sinned during the Old Testament era. God sees all time and the existence of man through the cross. He thus sees the sins of all men of all history through the cross. Therefore, in His foreknowledge of the Lamb who was crucified before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8), God forgave sins under the Old Testament law because He foresaw the cross. Jesus' sacrifice, therefore, applied to sins that were committed under both the old and new covenants. The sacrifice of Jesus not only took care of man's sin problem, it brought into force the new covenant for which He is the mediator.

INSTITUTION OF A NEW TESTAMENT

16,17 A testament is valid after men are dead:

A testament is a will. While the testator is alive he makes his will or testament in reference to the inheritance which he desires to give away after his death. The death of the one who makes the will is necessary in order to activate the will. In order to activate His testament (will), Jesus had to die (Gl 3:15). He therefore died on the cross in order to bring into force His testament, and thus, make available to all the heirs the benefits of His will. The official reading of the testament was on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 when Peter stood up in Jerusalem and announced the kingdom reign of Jesus. It was then that people submitted to His lordship, and subsequently,

dedicated without blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,

20 saying, “*This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded you.*”

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

22 And according to the law, almost everything is to be cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

23 ¶ Therefore, it was necessary that the cop-

ies of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

25 Nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of another.

26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world. But now once at the end of the ages He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

came into covenant relationship with Jesus through their belief and immersion into Christ for the remission of sins (See comments At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6). Through their immersion they became sons of God, and thus, “*heirs according to the promise*” (See comments Gl 3:26-29). It was on the day of Pentecost that obedient believers first received the inheritance that was provided in the new testament of Jesus by His own blood. **18-22** Both the old and new covenants were dedicated with blood. The old covenant with Israel was dedicated and inaugurated with the blood of animals (Ex 24:3-8). The tabernacle and its contents were dedicated and inaugurated with the blood of animals (Ex 40:9-15; Lv 8). Through the shedding of the blood of animals, Moses dedicated, inaugurated and cleansed both the tabernacle and its articles. With the blood of animals the covenant was established with Israel (See Lv 17). **Blood of the covenant that God has commanded you:** See Ex 24:3-8 (Compare Mt 26:28). What He had commanded them was to keep the conditions of the covenant, and thus, remain in covenant relationship with Him. **Without shedding of blood:** Since the old law and covenant were a shadow of good things to come, Jesus offered His blood in order to inaugurate the new covenant and offer purification from sin. There could be no remission of sins under the new covenant unless there was the shedding of blood. In the case of the new covenant, it was the shedding of the blood of the incarnate Son of God (Ep 1:7).

THE SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE OF JESUS

23 The physical things of the tabernacle on earth had to be cleansed and inaugurated by the blood of animals that originated from this world. However, these things were only a pattern of the things that were to come. The heavenly things could not be cleansed with the blood of animals. They had to be cleansed with better sacrifices, sacrifices that originated from heaven. **24** Christ did not enter into the Holy of Holies of the earthly tabernacle as the high priest. These things were only a shadow of that which was to come. Therefore, He entered into heaven in order to appear before God on our behalf (6:20; 8:1,2). He is there now interceding and mediating on behalf of those who have agreed to the conditions of the new covenant (7:25; Rm 8:34; 1 Jn

2:1). **25 Not ... offer Himself often:** This is the commentary of the offering of Jesus that was introduced in verse 12. Jesus offered Himself for eternal salvation with a onetime offering on the cross. The cross was a onetime event with unending consequences. The sufficiency of the sacrifice, therefore, is manifested in the fact that Jesus does not have to continually offer Himself throughout eternity. Such is in contrast to the Old Testament high priest who every year had to enter the Holy of Holies with sacrificial blood for the sins of the people (vs 7). **26 Once at the end of the ages:** Jesus made His sufficient sacrifice for all time at the end of the Jewish age. By this sacrifice He brought redemption to all those of all time who have walked by faith in the grace of God (vs 15; Rm 3:25). **27 Appointed for men to die once:** The illustration of the physical death of man illustrates what Jesus did on the cross for the salvation of men. As men die once, so He died once. The sacrifice is sufficient because He had to die only once in order to activate the redemption of God for the sins of men (10:10,12,14; Rm 6:10; 1 Pt 3:18). **After this the judgment:** We must not assume that there is a great deal of time between one's death and his final judgment. Once one dies, he is individually and finally judged (See comments Lk 16:19-31). There will be a final judgment at the end of the world, but that judgment will be the last of all judgments of God, and thus, will apply to those who are alive at the time of the final coming of Jesus. Since one is judged in his final judgment at the time of death, there will be no changing of that judgment. One does not rest in the bosom of Abraham with Jesus after death, while at the same time he is anxious about another final judgment that is yet to come in the last day. Once one faces final judgment at death, there are no more final judgments for that person. **28 Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many:** Jesus had to die only once in order to produce that which would bring salvation to all men (vs 12; Is 53:12; Rm 6:10; 1 Pt 2:24). **Look for Him:** In reference to the destruction of this world at the end of time, Peter wrote that we should look forward to the coming of the Lord (See comments 2 Pt 3:11,12; see 1 Co 1:7; Ph 3:20; 1 Th 1:10; 2 Tm 4:8; Ti 2:13). With eagerness, Christians look forward to the second coming of Jesus. Those who do not, are not prepared. Their hesitation mani-

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. And to those who look for Him He will appear the second time, not to bear sin, but for salvation.

Chapter 10

1 ¶ For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices that they offered year by year continually make perfect those who draw near.

2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, once cleansed, would have had no more feelings of guilt for sins?

3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year.

4 For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

5 ¶ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, “Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have no pleasure.

7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God.’”

8 After first saying, “Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin You did not desire, neither had pleasure in them” (that are offered according to the law),

9 then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He takes away the first so that He may establish the second.

10 By this will we have been sanctified

festes the fact that their minds are still focused on this world. Jesus is coming again, not to make another offering, but to redeem from this world those who have taken advantage of His redemption that was provided through the cross (See comments 1 Th 4:12-18).

Chapter 10

INSUFFICIENCY OF ANIMAL BLOOD

1 Shadow of the good things to come: We now live in the dispensation of the good things that have been made available in Christ. The substance of the shadow, therefore, was the light that Jesus brought into the world through the cross (Cl 2:17). This light of good things cast a shadow before the cross. Israel, therefore, lived in the shadow (8:5). In the context here, the writer reminds the readers that the Levitical system was only a shadow that had been cast by the true and real things of Christ that yet stood in the future in reference to those who lived before the cross (9:11). **Can never ... make those who draw near perfect:** The animal sacrifices, including those offered on the annual day of atonement, never in and of themselves purified those who offered them (9:9). It was impossible for the blood of animals to bring atonement on behalf of the worshipers who had sinned against God (9:10,11,14). It was impossible because animals were not created with the opportunity of eternity. Their existence is limited to the duration of their life in this world. They could not, therefore, be offered as an eternal atonement between God and man. Since there is no eternity in animals, animals could not stand between man, who had potential eternity, and God who is the source of all eternal existence. Animals, therefore, who are less than man, could not be offered on behalf of man who has soul and spirit that has potential eternal existence in the presence of God. **2** If the sacrifices of animals could have atoned for the sins of the people, then they would not have continually been offered (7:19; 9:9). The fact that they had to be

continually offered is evidence that they were an insufficient sacrifice for sin. **3 Reminder:** Though the animal sacrifices did not bring atonement, God required Israel to offer such in order to remind them of their sin. Therefore, since they were continually reminded of their sin and the inability of the sacrifices to bring atonement, they were driven to the fulfillment of the promise of God that there would come something in the future wherein God would remit their sins once and for all (See Is 54; Gl 2:15-21; 1 Pt 1:10-12). **4 Not possible:** It is not possible that the blood of animals should take away sin because sin is between those who have been created after the image of God and God Himself. Sin is between God and man, and thus, only the One who was both God and man could mediate on behalf of both parties. Through grace, therefore, God was incarnate on behalf of man in order that an incarnate blood offering be made for the atonement of man’s sin (Ti 2:11). **5-7 A body You have prepared:** God could not accept the offering of animals as a sacrifice for sins. Therefore, an incarnate body was prepared for the Son of God in order that He be offered for the sins of humanity (Ps 40:6-8; see Jn 1:14; Ph 2:5-8; compare 1 Sm 15:22). When Jesus came into this world, therefore, He came to do the will of the Father to offer Himself as the sacrificial lamb to atone for the sins of man (Jn 1:29; see 5:8; Lk 22:42). **8 According to the law:** God required the offering of the animal sacrifices though they did not bring atonement for sin. Their offering was a test of Israel’s faith in God who would eventually provide an answer for their sin problem in the offering of the cross (Rm 3:25). **9 He takes away the first:** Before He came into the world, Jesus knew the insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices which the priests offered for the people. Therefore, He came with the intention of doing away with both the priesthood and the sacrifices (See comments Rm 7:1-4). When He came, He took away the first covenant and law in order to establish His covenant and law, wherein men could receive the ben-

through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 ¶ And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices that can never take away sins.

12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

13 from that time waiting until His enemies are made His footstool.

14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

15 ¶ And the Holy Spirit is also a witness to us, for after He had said,

16 ¶ *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My laws on their hearts and on their minds I will write them,”* He then said,

17 *“And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.”*

18 Now where there is remission of these, *there is no longer an offering for sin.*

19 ¶ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus,

efits of His sacrifice that was offered once and for all time (9:12,24). **10** *By this will:* Through the offering of the incarnate Son of God, the will of God was accomplished (Jn 17:19; Lk 22:42; see Hb 2:11; 10:14,29; 13:12; Ep 5:26). As a result of the offering, complete cleansing of sin was made available to man (9:12).

EXALTATION OF CHRIST

11 *Daily ministering:* At the time this epistle was written, the priests of Jerusalem were continuing the animal sacrifices. Some students have affirmed that God allowed the law and sacrifices to continue for forty years to A.D. 70 while the messengers of the gospel had a chance to call out of Israel those who were children of Abraham by faith. Their call was based on a contrast between the insufficiency of animal sacrifices and the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Those who heeded the call were made dead to the necessity of the animal sacrifices by the sacrificial offering of Jesus (See comments Rm 7:1-4). The message of the evangelists to the Jews of the synagogues was that the Christ had made a sufficient sacrifice, and thus, animal sacrifices were no longer necessary. This was surely great news to Jews who were scattered throughout the world and who realized that it was not possible for the blood of animals to take away sins. **Can never take away sins:** Since the event of the cross, there were those in Israel who were continuing to offer animal sacrifices for the sins of the people (Nm 28:3). However, the writer has explained the futility of such efforts. The sacrifices could not take away sins (vss 1-4). **12** In contrast to the necessity for the continual offering of animal sacrifices, Jesus did not continually have to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins. Once He made the sacrifice of the cross, He sat down at the right hand of God (1:3; 9:12,24; Cl 3:1). The sufficiency of His sacrifice, therefore, is manifested in the fact that He had to make the sacrifice only one time. **Right hand of God:** After the sufficient sacrifice was made, Jesus took the position of authority over all things (8:1; Ps 110:1; Ep 1:20-22). **13** All the enemies of righteousness are now under the kingdom reign of Jesus (Ps 110:1). Though we do not now see everything in control by Jesus, we must not allow our lack of understanding of His universal kingdom reign to deceive us into thinking that things are out of control (2:5-9; 1 Pt 3:22; see comments Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:5-11). Jesus will reign over all things until the last enemy, physical death, is destroyed

(See comments 1 Co 15:24-28). **14** **Perfected forever:** Those who have been immersed into Christ have been forgiven all sin (At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6). They are now being set apart for eternal dwelling through the blood of Jesus that continually washes them of sin (See comments 1 Jn 1:7-9). **15-18** The writer here quotes from the context of Jeremiah 31:31-34. He does so in order to prove that with the coming of the new covenant came also the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus. With the sacrifice of Jesus came the complete forgiveness of sins of those who come into covenant relationship with God (See 8:10-12). **No longer an offering:** If the sins are completely remitted through the offering of Jesus, then there is no longer a need to make a sacrifice (9:12,24,25). The Hebrew writer's contrast between the old and new covenants in relation to the forgiveness of sins is here complete. Since there is no forgiveness through the offering of animal sacrifices, the offering of such sacrifices is a futile effort on behalf of those who have returned to the Levitical system. In view of the sufficiency of the offering of Jesus, one would wonder why these early Christians even considered returning to the Levitical system. The answer to our wonder may be in the fact that they were dull of hearing, and thus, did not spiritually progress in their understanding of the sufficiency of the cross though they had been Christians for some time (See comments 5:9 - 6:6). When one ceases to grow in knowledge of the revealed mystery of God, He will not comprehend the greatness of the cross, and thus, the atonement which God poured forth for the salvation of man (2 Pt 3:18). It is easy to turn back from that which one does not fully understand.

DRAWING NEAR WITH ASSURANCE

19 The doctrinal arguments of the letter have now been completed and the writer moves on with a message of encouragement to draw near to what God has provided through Jesus. **Boldness:** It is through the blood of Jesus that we can confidently approach God (4:14-16; Ep 2:18). We can have confidence that we will enter into heaven through the blood of Jesus (9:8,12). Therefore, one's confidence to enter into heaven is not based on the accumulation of good words that one would propose to meritoriously earn the right to enter heaven. Our confidence is based on the grace of God as it was revealed through the sacrificial offering of the blood of Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11). **20,21** **New and living way:** Jesus is the new and living way through whom we

20 by a new and living way that He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and *having* a high priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold firm to the confession of *our* faith without wavering, for He *is* faithful who

promised.

24 And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

26 ¶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judg-

have access to heaven (See 7:24,25; Jn 10:9; 14:6).

Veil: Heaven is forever open to all those who would approach God through Jesus (8:1,2; 9:3). **High priest:**

Jesus continually works on our behalf in order to cleanse us of sin (4:14; 1 Jn 1:7-9). **House of God:** In contrast to the physical tabernacle of the Old Testament, Christians are now the spiritual house of God (See Is 2:2,3; 1 Tm 3:15).

22 Let us draw near: In view of the fact that Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient and that he continues to work as our high priest, we can have full assurance of our salvation (See 4:16; 6:11; 11:6). Such assurance is not based on our meritorious keeping of law, but on the sufficiency of the work of God on our behalf through Jesus (Ep 3:12). We can thus draw near to God because God drew near to us through Jesus (7:19; 10:1; Js 4:8).

A sincere heart: In contrast to the external devotion of the Old Testament priest who simply carried out his duties, the priests of the new covenant (1 Pt 2:5,9) come to God with an internal commitment of faith to trust in the grace of God (Rm 5:1,2; see Ep 2:1-10).

Sprinkled: This metaphor is taken from the Old Testament where blood was sprinkled on the people in order to set them apart and inaugurate their covenant relationship with God (9:13,14; Nm 19). When one is immersed into Christ, he is metaphorically sprinkled with the cleansing blood of Jesus as he comes into a covenant relationship with God at the point of immersion (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Therefore, it is at the point of immersion that one is washed of all sin by the blood of Jesus (At 22:16; Ti 3:5; 1 Pt 3:21; see Ep 1:3,7).

23 Faithful: Christians must make the effort to remain faithful. It is their responsibility to remain committed to that which they confessed when they came into a covenant relationship with God through immersion (3:6,14; 4:14; Ep 6:10). Christians must have confidence in the One who is faithful to bring about their hope (11:11; 1 Co 1:9; 10:13; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 3:3). It is Jesus who is faithful to our commitment to trust in His work of functioning as our high priest.

24 Consider one another: Christians do not live independent of one another. They are responsible for encouraging one another to remain faithful to the Lord (See comments Gl 6:1,2). Christians consider one another for the purpose of stirring up active love and good works toward themselves and those outside the church (Gl 6:10). Therefore, they must meet in situations where love can be encouraged. They must meet in situations where they can plan and activate good works among themselves and the communities in which they live. Because of what the writer encourages them to accomplish in these assemblies, we would assume

that more than the Sunday assembly is under consideration in this context. Good works are encouraged when Christians meet together for planning and goal setting. Christians must meet together in order to encourage one another to define the work of every member, as well as to stir one another up to carry out their defined works. **25 Not forsaking the assembling:** Christians must not forsake the assemblies that the disciples have agreed to have in order to encourage love and the activation of planned work. Individual members must show up for the meetings where works are planned and assigned. They must attend when there are assemblies planned for mutual encouragement. Those who forsake these meetings are actually refusing to become involved in the work (1 Th 1:3; see Hb 6:10,11). Keep in mind that the writer does not specify the time of these assemblies, nor does he designate where and how many assemblies are involved to accomplish what is designated in verse 24. He simply states that the purpose for the assemblies is to stir up love, and thus, implement good works. **The day approaching:** The word "day" is used to refer to a period of time, not a specific 24-hour day. Reference here could be to two possible times. First, reference could be to the time of the destruction of the Jewish State by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This would be the time of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus that the things to which the readers were returning would soon be destroyed (See comments Mt 24). Second, the writer could have in mind the finality of all things in the last day when Jesus comes a second time in order to exercise judgment upon the entire world (Compare Jn 12:48; Rm 13:11,12; 1 Th 5:4; Ph 4:5). In view of the context, the first meaning would probably be the correct conclusion. Jesus had prophesied the conclusion of national Israel by the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24). In view of the fact that the principal problem facing the Hebrews was their apostasy to the Levitical system, the writer here reminds them of the prophecy of Jesus concerning the physical destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This would be the time when God would once more "shake" things in order to seal the establishment of the new covenant and close the shadow of the things of the old dispensation (See comments 12:25-29).

WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY

26 Sin willfully: There are times when one sins ignorantly or at a moment of human weakness. This is not the sin about which the writer is referring. Reference here is to the deliberate life-style of turning away

ment and fiery indignation that will devour the adversaries.

28 Anyone who has set aside Moses' law died without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

29 Of how much severer punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted as a common thing the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know Him who has said, "*Ven-*

geance is Mine. I will repay, says the Lord." And again, "*The Lord will judge His people.*"

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

32 ¶ But remember the former days in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions with those who were so treated.

34 For you had compassion on me in my

from the grace of God (See Nm 15:30). The individual under consideration here is the one who has rejected the truth of the gospel, and thus, has turned to the insufficient sacrifices of the Old Testament law. He obeyed the gospel, but is now in the process of returning to the insufficiency of the law and animal sacrifices. **The truth:** Reference here is to the grace and truth of God that was revealed through the cross (See comments Gl 1:6; 2:5,14; see Cl 1:5). It is from this that the apostate is turning in this context. **No longer remains a sacrifice:** Since this apostate has discontinued his walk in the light of the gospel, he is thus living in sin for which he has no sufficient sacrifice (6:4-6; see comments 1 Jn 1:7-9).

27 Judgment ... fiery indignation: The apostate has nothing to which to look forward except the destruction of soul and body in hell (Mt 10:28). The destiny of the apostate is destruction from the presence of the One who gives unending existence (12:26; Rm 2:8; 2 Th 1:7-9; see Zp 1:18). The metaphor "fiery" carries with it the thought of the consuming nature of the indignation that is prepared for those who fall away from the truth of the gospel. The fiery indignation will devour the adversaries of God and the church. **28** Under the Old Testament law it took the testimony of two or three witnesses to pronounce the sentence of death upon one who had violated a law of God that demanded the death penalty (Dt 17:2-6; 19:15; see 2:2,3; Mt 18:16). **29 Severer punishment:** The punishment is worse in the sense that they have rejected something that is greater than the law of Moses. Jesus is greater than Moses (3:1-6). The new covenant is greater than the old covenant (8:6 - 10:18). The priesthood of Jesus is greater than the Levitical priesthood (7:11- 20). The sacrifice of Jesus is greater than the blood of animals (9:11-22). If one rejects these greater things under the new covenant, then certainly it is reasonable to say that the punishment will be greater (2:3). Some students have concluded from this statement that the fiery punishment will be more intense as a result of turning away from the truth of the gospel. However, the worse punishment probably refers to the greater time for more stripes to be inflicted on the apostate as explained by Jesus in Lk 12:41-48 (See comments). The intensity of the punishment of hell is the same. The time of punishment is longer for those who have greater and more hideous sin (See comments Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). **Trodden ... counted as a common thing ... insulted:** Such is what the apostate who has returned to the Levitical system has done in reference to the truth of the death of Jesus on the cross.

He has rejected the sacrificial blood offering of the Son of God (See 9:15-22; 13:20; Mt 26:26-29; 1 Co 11:29). Those who have turned back to the Old Testament system have said to God that the sacrifice of His Son was not sufficient. They have insulted God's grace that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). These are certainly direct words that should strike fear in the hearts of any who would choose to forsake faithfulness to the sacrificial blood of Jesus. In the context direct reference is to those who were forsaking the truth of the gospel in order to return to the Levitical system. However, the generic application of this warning would apply to those who forsake the truth of the gospel by turning away to the world. It applies to those who forsake the grace of God in order to return to the world. This is why Peter described the apostate with the proverb, "*a dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire*" (2 Pt 2:22). **30 Vengeance is Mine:** One must not deceive himself into thinking that God will overlook the action of the apostate. Since the life of the apostate is an insult of the Son of God and the blood of His sacrifice on the cross, in the end God will send forth His vengeance on those who are the enemies of all righteousness (Dt 32:35,36; Rm 12:19). **31 A fearful thing:** Those who are on the verge of apostasy should fear. They should be in fear of the Creator who gave His only begotten Son on the cross of Calvary (Jn 3:16). One has greatly deceived himself if he has led himself to believe that he can turn away from the cross, and yet, escape God's vengeance that will come upon him because he mocked the blood of Jesus (See Mt 10:28; Lk 12:5).

REMEMBER THE FORMER DAYS

32,33 Remember the former days: The exhortation is that they think about the days when they were first converted (See comments Rv 2:5; see Hb 6:9,10; Gl 3:4). **Enlightened:** They were enlightened by the light of the gospel. The indication here is that they had been Christians for a long time. We do not know how long. However, when they first became Christians they suffered many things from those who persecuted them (See 12:4; 1 Co 4:9). They willingly suffered with those who suffered for Christ in order that they preach the gospel to the world (See At 14:22; Ph 1:7). They paid the price of persecution to begin their Christian walk. The writer here exhorts them not to forsake the price they paid to be God's children. It seems that when the persecution ceased, they became comfortable, and thus,

chains, and took joyfully the seizure of your goods, knowing that you have for yourselves in heaven a better and an enduring possession.

35 Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

37 *“For yet a little while, and He who will come will come and will not tarry.*

38 *Now the just shall live by faith. But if any man draws back, My soul will have no pleasure in him.”*

39 But we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

indifferent or lazy in their Christian responsibilities to grow in the knowledge of Jesus (See comments 5:8 - 6:6). They became dull of hearing, lazy in their commitment, and complacent concerning all that God had done for them through the cross. **34 Compassion on me:** They suffered with those who were imprisoned for preaching the gospel (See comments Ph 4:10-18). They rejoiced when their possessions were confiscated by those who persecuted them (See Mt 5:12; At 5:41; Rm 5:3; Js 1:1,2; compare Mt 6:20). It was not that these who were on the verge of apostasy had become Christians without hardships. On the contrary, they had endured great tribulation as newborn Christians. However, time had passed since the early days of fighting for the faith. In their complacency, therefore, they were considering a return to the easy cultural environment of the community. For this reason it is believed that they lived in a community where there was a strong Jewish influence. The Jewish influence of the community was overbearing, and thus, they were tempted to conform to the religion of the community. Such is not an uncommon temptation for Christians who live in communities where numerous religions of men exist. In times of peace and indifference, it is easy to be drawn by the lure of community religiosity so as to become just another religious group of the community. Christians must be diligent to remember that they are the children of God, and thus, are called by God to follow His word and not the man-made religious inventions of those among whom they must live. One does not have a right to become a part of a church of his choice, even though the church is accepted by the majority of the community. We have only the option of becoming a member of the church of God's choice. Any other choice is no option at all. **A better and an enduring possession:** The true possession of the Christian is in heaven (Mt 6:19-21). This world is not the Christian's home or his final possession. In order to remain true to one's calling, therefore, he must focus his mind on that which is before. He must look forward to the heavenly realm of existence which is not of this world (See 2 Pt 3:13). **35** Since they have heaven before, they must not forsake the confidence of their salvation which comes through depending on the grace of God. Their confidence in the grace of God will eventually result in a reward in eternal glory (vs 23; 3:6,14; Mt 5:12). **36 Need of endurance:** Herein is identified their problem. Their weakness was their inability to stick to their commitment. Some disciples cannot endure through the fires of persecution (See comments Mt 13:3-9,18-23). Satan's weapon of persecution has captivated and destroyed many who were weak in faith. The Hebrews had endured this attack of Satan. However, one of the greatest weapons of Satan against the church is com-

placency and indifference. It was because of complacency and indifference that the Hebrews were falling victim to the work of Satan. In times of ease they were losing their commitment (See 12:1; Lk 21:19). **Receive the promise:** *“Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life”* (Rv 2:10; see Mt 24:13; Cl 3:24; Js 1:12). **37 He who will come will come:** The writer certainly did not give the readers a false hope that Jesus was coming in His final coming in their lifetime. The New Testament nowhere teaches the doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus in the lifetime of the first readers of the New Testament letters. If it did not teach such in the first century, then certainly it does not teach such today. Reference in this verse is to the coming of Jesus. However, reference is to the coming of Jesus in time in judgment. This judgment would be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus that is recorded in Matthew 24 (See comments Mt 24). Jesus was about to come in time in judgment upon the nation of Israel by the destruction of Jerusalem. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. This was God's final statement concerning the finality of the Old Testament law and nation of Israel. Since the theme of this letter is about those who were on the verge of returning to the Levitical system of the Old Testament, it seems appropriate that the writer would mention on more than one occasion in this letter the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy concerning the destruction of the physical symbols of the Levitical system of worship. Therefore, in a little while from the time of the writing of this quotation from Habbakuk 2:3,4, the destruction would occur. **38 The just will live by faith:** This has been the principle of salvation from the beginning of time (See Hb 2:3,4; Rm 1:17; Gl 3:11). Those who are justified through faith will depend on the grace of God for their salvation. Since no one can be justified by perfect keeping of law, and that there is no atonement for sin through the blood of animals, those who would stand just before God must trust in Him to save them (See comments Gl 3:11). **39 Not of those who draw back to destruction:** The author included his readers in the “we” of this statement. He was confident that they were not of the nature of those apostates who have already fallen back into a state wherein destruction awaited them (2 Th 1:7-9). They would not turn away from the blood of the cross (See comments Gl 5:4-6; 2 Pt 2:20-22). **Those who believe:** It is here that the writer introduces the subject of chapter 11. He will define the belief under discussion here as a faith in the work of God to accomplish that which He has promised. This faith, therefore, moves one to obedience to the will of God because of one's confidence that God will bring about a reward to those who remain faithful.

Chapter 11

1 ¶ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the ancients obtained a *good* testimony.

3 ¶ By faith we understand that the universe was formed by the word of God, so that the things that are seen were not made of things that are visible.

4 ¶ By faith Abel offered to God a more ex-

cellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. And by *faith* he being dead still speaks.

5 ¶ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death, “*and was not found, because God had taken him.*” For before he was taken up he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith *it is impossible to please*

Chapter 11

THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

In this discussion the writer sets forth examples of the nature of the faith that is pleasing to God. It is a faith that moves the one who possesses it into action and confidence in the promises of God (See comments Js 2:14-26). It is a faith that does not give up hope in what God has set forth through promise as a reward for the believer. It is not a simple confession with one's mouth that he believes in God. It is a life commitment to the work of God who is working to bring about the final end and purpose of all things. Therefore, those who would affirm that a simple confession of faith with one's mouth is sufficient to please God, are actually mocking the faith of those in this chapter who gave their entire lives in a sacrificial walk in obedience to the will of God.

1 Substance: The Greek word here could be translated “assurance,” “confidence” or “realization” (See the use of the word in 3:14). It is heaven for which Christians hope and strive. Their faith, therefore, gives substance to their hope. Faith that is based on evidence is one's personal confidence that those things for which he hopes are real. It is confidence that God will bring about His promises because He has made them on the basis of His existence and His oath (See 6:18,19). **Evidence:** Biblical faith is based on evidence. John recorded the evidence of the miraculous works of Jesus in order that men believe (Jn 20:30,31). God has never expected men to believe without evidence. For this reason, He confirmed His messengers and message by miraculous manifestations of Himself (See comments 2:3,4; Mk 16:17-20). Belief without evidence is only superstition. The faith of the Christian, however, is not superstition. Our faith today is based on the record of the testimony of those who actually experienced the confirming work of God. Christians have hope in those things that they have not experienced because God has given miraculous evidence to the truth of the message they believe (See Rm 8:24,25; 2 Co 4:18; compare 2 Co 1:22; 5:5; Ep 1:14). Therefore, Christians walk by faith (2 Co 5:7). **2 Testimony:** The writer here introduces us to the witness of the patriarchs of old who gave their testimony to the work and faithfulness of God. They personally experienced the work of God in their lives, and thus, their lives are here recorded in order to give us further evidence upon which to base our faith. If so many great men made so many great sacrifices, then we must conclude that they experienced the work of God in their lives.

3 Framed by the word of God: Nothing has ex-

isted from all eternity outside the existence of God. Therefore, through the commanding word of God, all that now exists was brought into being (Ps 33:6,9). The dualist is wrong, therefore, to assume that matter has always existed. Only God is eternal. From Him all that exists has come from the command of His word in the creating work of the Son (See comments Cl 1:16). **Not made of things which are visible:** This is the definition of the creating work of God. Creation is bringing the universe into existence out of that which previously did not exist. The physical worlds that now exist came into being out of nothing. The spirit world of angels came into being out of nothing. The fact that something now exists that we can experience, is proof that something has always existed. That which has always existed had to have the power to create. This was Paul's argument in Rm 1:20. Therefore, since that which exists cannot come from nothing, we understand that something has always existed. That which has always existed is God, whose existence can be perceived through the world that has been created. Honest investigation of the material world through science, therefore, will lead one to the conclusion that there is an eternal Designer behind the order of this world. The Hebrew writer continues throughout the remainder of this chapter to list patriarchs of old who came to this conclusion, and thus, lived lives of faith in the eternal God who can bring about His promises.

4 The faith that we see in the illustrations of this chapter describe the faith that is well pleasing to God. It is a faith that acts. **By faith Abel offered:** The writer here begins with a definition of faith. It is a faith that is obedient to the will of God. Every example of faith that is given in this chapter is a faith that motivated the individual who possessed it into active response to God. In this case, Abel was obedient to offer a blood sacrifice that was according to the commandment of God (Gn 4:4,5). He was thus judged righteous because of his faith that was manifested by his obedience to the will of God (See Mt 23:35; 1 Jn 3:12). **Being dead still speaks:** Abel is now dead. However, the account of his active faith still preaches a lesson on true obedient faith. The testimony of his life and the example of the faithful who are listed in this chapter, teach many lessons on obedient faith (See comments Js 2:14-26). **5 Enoch was taken up:** Because of his righteous living by faith, Enoch did not physically die. He was taken by God (Gn 5:21-24; compare 2 Kg 2:11). **He pleased God:** The testimony of Enoch is that he was obedient to the will of God. The reward for his faithful work was that God spared him from experiencing physical death. **6 With-out faith:** If one's faith does not move him into action,

Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

7 ¶ By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is according to faith.

8 ¶ By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place that he would later receive as an inheritance, obeyed. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he journeyed in the land of promise as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tents

with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,

10 for he was looking for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

11 ¶ Through faith even Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed. And she bore a child when she was past age because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude and innumerable as the sand that is by the sea shore.

13 ¶ These all died in faith, not having received the promises. But having seen them

it is a faith that does not please God. The writer is here affirming that faith must act in obedience to the will of God. Without this obedient faith, one has deceived himself into believing that a simple belief in the existence of God is sufficient for salvation (See comments Js 1:22; 2:14-26). **7 Noah:** Noah's faith moved him into action in reference to what God said was coming (Gn 6:13-22; see Gn 6:8 - 9:28). It is possible that rain had never fallen on the face of the earth before the days of the flood. The earth was watered by a mist that came up from the ground (Gn 2:5,6). This may explain why it was difficult for people to believe the concept of a great flood that was to come. Nevertheless, Noah and his family believed what God said He would do. As a result of their belief, they built the ark and were thus saved from the destruction of the flood (1 Pt 3:20). **Condemned the world:** Noah's obedient faith condemned the world in that it manifested trust in God in the midst of a generation that had given up God (See comments Rm 1:18-32). The obedient faith he possessed manifested to the world, and thus judged the world, that obedience to God was necessary for deliverance from the flood. **Righteousness:** It is faith that moves one to do that which is right, and thus, one is accounted righteous before God by trusting in the grace of God (Rm 3:22). **8 Abraham obeyed:** When God called Abraham to leave his father's house, at the time he lived in Ur of the Chaldeas (See Gn 11:31ff; 12:1-4; Ne 9:7,8; Ps 37:29; At 7:2-4; Rm 4:1-3,13; Gl 3:6-9; Js 2:21-23). Upon hearing the call of God, he journeyed to a land to which he had never been before. It was a land that he would eventually receive as an inheritance for the nation which God promised would come from his seed. **9 A strange country:** At the time Abraham lived in Canaan, he was an expatriate. Though God promised him the land, the fulfillment of the promise would not come about until over four hundred years later. Therefore, he and his son Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, did not live in the promised land in fulfillment of the promise of God (6:17; Gn 12:8; 13:3,18; 18:1,9; 26:3; 28:13). They lived by faith that God would eventually give the land to their seed. **10 The city:** Because he walked by faith, Abraham looked beyond the physical land of Canaan and the tents in which he and his family lived. He and his family looked to an eternal dwelling beyond this world. Though God created this world, Abraham knew that this world was

not all there was in reference to the creative power of God (12:22; Rv 21:10). Since God is not of this material world, Abraham concluded that God would dwell in a realm that was above and beyond the confines of this physical world. He thus looked forward to dwelling in the environment of God. **11 Sarah ... bore a child:** Sarah did momentarily doubt when the announcement was first made that she would have a son in her old age (Gn 17:19; 18:9-15; 21:1,2). However, the writer here looks at the nature of her entire life. She walked by faith. Though one may stumble at times in moments of unbelief, God views the nature of one's life. The nature or tenor of Sarah's life was one of faith, and thus, she is here recorded to be a woman who walked by faith. **Judged Him faithful:** And so should all those who have faith in God. God has promised the glory of eternal dwelling in His presence. From the examples that the writer gives, he wants to encourage us to consider God faithful to deliver on His promises (10:23). When men become indifferent in their faith in God, they begin to assume that God will not do what He promised He would do (See comments 2 Pt 3:1-4). However, through a vibrant faith one manifests that he is looking for the fulfillment of the promises of God (2 Pt 3:11-13). **12 As the stars ... sand:** Though Sarah and Abraham were past the ages of bearing children (Rm 4:18,19), through the miraculous work of God who worked to revive the womb of Sarah, He fulfilled His promise that He would make of Abraham a great nation (Gn 12:1-3; 15:5; 22:17). The nation became in multitude as the metaphor explains. It was as the stars of the heavens and sand of the beach. Abraham and Sarah were old in age at the time the promise was made. Sarah was past the age of bearing children. The writer's point here is that because Abraham and Sarah were old and "as good as dead," God was able to work through their aged bodies in order to accomplish that which He had promised. The work of the birth of Isaac, therefore, was the result of God's working in Sarah's womb in order to give her power to conceive and give birth to Isaac. The birth of Isaac was the result of the direct work of God in order to fulfill His promises.

13 Died in faith: The patriarchs did not receive the complete fulfillment of the promises that were made to them. Though Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah experienced the immediate work of God in their

afar off were assured of *them* and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they came out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

17 ¶ By faith Abraham, when he was tested,

offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, "*In Isaac your seed will be called.*"

19 He concluded that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also figuratively received him back.

20 ¶ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 ¶ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

lives that referred to the fulfillment of the long-term promises of God, they died in faith not having experienced the total fulfillment of the promises (See vs 27; Jn 8:56). The writer's lesson lies in the nature of their faith. They maintained obedient faith until their death, though the fulfillment of the promises of God did not come about in their lifetimes. **Seen them afar off:** They realized that God had something greater in the future than their immediate experience with God working in their lives (See 1 Pt 1:10-12; compare Gl 3:8). We live in the time wherein God has fulfilled many of the promises that were made to the Fathers. However, there are still more promises to be fulfilled. Christians view the totality of God's work in their lives and in the present existence of the church as evidence of things yet to come. God has things planned that reach far beyond this world (Rm 8:24,25; Ti 1:2). It is on the eternal plan of God that Christians must focus by faith, and thus, trust in God to work out His eternal scheme of redemption to bring them into an eternal dwelling with Him. **Strangers and pilgrims:** When one focuses his attention on the long-term plan of God that is beyond this world, then he understands that he is a spiritual expatriate in this world (See Gn 23:4; 47:9; 1 Ch 29:15; Ps 39:12; Ep 2:19; 1 Pt 1:17; 2:11). Through knowledge of the fact that this world is not his home, the Christian can maintain his focus on things that are not of this world. See comments Cl 3:2,3; see Rm 8:18; 2 Pt 3:11-13. **14,15 Seek a homeland:** One should never make this world his home (See 1 Jn 2:15; Mt 6:24; Js 4:4). Expatriates who dwell among the nations of the world remember their homeland. So it should be with Christians whose spirits originated from God after whom they were created. They came into this world when God created and gave the spirit of man to the physical body (See Nm 16:22; 27:16; Jb 34:14; Ec 12:7; Is 57:16; Zc 12:1). The homeland of our spirit, therefore, is the presence of God. It is for this presence that Christians yearn to return. **Thinking of that country:** Abraham left his father's house in order to journey to a country to which he had never been before (vs 8). He and his descendants could have returned to Mesopotamia, Abraham's original home. However, they were seeking a heavenly dwelling, and thus, their yearning for a heavenly dwelling was much stronger than the desire to return to Abraham's homeland on this earth. **16 A better:** In comparison to any earthly homeland, heaven is far greater (Rm 8:18; 1 Pt 1:3-5). Abraham

and his descendants received the promised land of Canaan. However, the final rest of heaven was always in their minds, and thus, they continued to seek for God's final rest (See comments ch 4). **He has prepared a city:** Travellers seek rest in the city. Such is the destination of their journey. The writer's metaphorical use of the word city here stimulates feelings of coming to the end of one's journey. The end of the Christian journey, as well as all those who have walked by faith in the promises of God, is the eternal dwelling in the heavenly city of God (12:22; 13:14; see Jn 14:2; Rv 21:2).

17-19 When he was tested: The faith of Abraham was tested when God called on him to offer his son as a sacrifice (See Gn 21:12; 22:1-14; Rm 4:17; 9:7; Js 2:21). Though Isaac was his only son through whom God had promised that He would fulfill the promises, without questioning God Abraham set forth to offer him. Abraham set forth to obey the command of God because he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead (Rm 4:17; compare Gn 22:5). **Only begotten:** The same Greek word here (*monogenes*) is also used in the John 3:16 in reference to Jesus being the only begotten Son of God. There seems to be a parallel of thought in these two offerings. In His command to offer Isaac, God was preparing the minds of Israel for the time when the sacrifice of an only begotten Son would not be stopped by an angel's command. Though the angel stopped Abraham from thrusting a knife into the heart of Isaac as a sacrifice, the Son of God was not spared from the blow of death on the cross of Calvary. In the event of Abraham's offering of Isaac, God wanted all Israel to remember that there would be a day when a Son would be offered. The Son would be the only begotten Son of God. **20 Isaac blessed:** These were the blessings that would come from God's original promises to Abraham (See Gn 27:1-40). As Abraham, Isaac believed that God would bring about the fulfillment of His promises. Therefore, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning those things God would bring about in their lives. **21 Jacob blessed:** Jacob also believed in the promises that God had made to Abraham and to himself (Gn 12:1-3; 48:14-20). The blessing of the promises thus continued through his sons because of his faith that God would bring about the fulfillment of what He had promised. **Top of his staff:** The thought here is probably a reference to his continued journeys. The staff was used throughout one's journey, and thus, Jacob

22 ¶ By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

23 ¶ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents because they saw *he was* a beautiful child. And they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24 ¶ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

25 choosing rather to suffer mistreatment with the people of God than to temporarily enjoy the pleasures of sin,

26 considering the reproach of Christ greater

riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

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

28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 ¶ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry *land*. *But* when the Egyptians attempted to do so, they were drowned.

30 ¶ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe when she had

continued to worship and trust in God's promises throughout his life of dwelling in tents. On the other hand, consider the fact that the original Hebrew word for "staff" is "bed." The word "staff" is the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament text (See Gn 47:29-31). The writer's meaning, therefore, could be that Jacob continued to believe and worship God even to the time of his deathbed. He did not waver throughout his entire life from what God had promised. **22 Joseph:** Joseph had faith that God would give Israel the promised land, for when he was about to die he gave instructions that his bones be buried in the land (Gn 50:24,25; Ex 13:19; Ja 24:32). **23 By his parents:** When Moses was born, his parents saw in him a special individual who could accomplish God's work (Ex 2:1-3). Therefore, they were not afraid of Pharaoh's command that the midwives kill all the male children of Israel when they were born (Ex 1:16-22). **24-26 Moses ... refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter:** When Moses grew up he made a free-moral choice to identify with Israel. By refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he identified himself as a Jew, and thus, was willing to suffer the consequences of his choice (Ex 2:11-15; compare Ps 84:10). His greatness was manifested in his choice not to covet power, possessions and position. On the contrary, he chose to take the humble position of the servants of God, and thus, suffer the persecution of the people of God (See Ex 2:2; compare Ph 2:5-11; At 14:22). **Pleasures of sin:** The deceptiveness of sin often lies in the fact that it brings pleasure. The deceived, therefore, concluded that the pleasure is good, and thus, cannot be sin. **Reproach ... treasures:** The writer here contrasts two life-styles. In the environment in which Moses grew up, one was encouraged to live in the comfort of an Egyptian palace. The other choice was to live in the environment of those who were at the mercy of Pharaoh's taskmasters. Moses put into action in his life the principle of loving not the world neither the things that are in the world (1 Jn 2:15). He made the choice of having only one master, that master being the God of heaven (See Mt 6:24). Because of his choice, however, he suffered the reproach of those who lived after the world (13:13). **Looking to the reward:** The writer again reminds us of that which will guard us against falling. When our focus is on heaven, as was Moses'

focus, then we will take every precaution not to endanger our destiny (10:35). Those who take their minds off heavenly things and focus on the things of the world, will lose their hope of heaven, and thus, lose their reward (Rm 8:18; 2 Co 4:17; see comments Cl 3:1-3). **27 He forsook Egypt:** All of what the writer is here revealing indicates that Moses' departure from Egypt was not accidental in his life. He made choices. Those choices were based on his personal decision to live according to godly principles. It is worthy to note that though he lived in the culture of the Egyptians, he did not allow the culture of Egypt to divert his attention away from that which was truth. He lived among people who were polytheists, and yet, he chose to believe in the one true and living God. In this we see the strength of His spiritual leadership and why God chose him to lead His people out of Egyptian captivity. He was able to live in a culture that was contrary to the will of God, and at the same time, maintain his distance from the temptations of power and possessions. Such is the character and ability of true leaders that God can use in His work to evangelize the world through leadership of the church. **Seeing Him who is invisible:** Though Moses lived among polytheists, he concluded that there was only one true God (See comments Rm 1:20; At 17:23-29). As all Israel, Moses could look beyond the imaginations of humanly invented religions and gods and conclude that there was one God, a God who is greater than the imaginations of men (Jn 4:24). **28 Kept the Passover:** They obeyed the command of God to offer a Passover lamb because they trusted that God would deliver them from the bondage of Egypt (Ex 12:21-23). The lamb was slain and its blood was placed on the doors of the houses. Death, therefore, passed over the house wherein there was a firstborn. **29 Passed through the Red Sea:** The Israelites again expressed their faith by walking through the Red Sea on dry ground when the power of God separated the waters (Ex 14:13-29). **30 The walls of Jericho fell:** Their obedient faith led the nation to march around Jericho for seven days, and seven times on the seventh day (Ja 6:1-21). As a result of their obedience, the walls of Jericho collapsed and the city was taken. **31 Rahab did not perish:** Because Rahab believed in the one true God, she received the spies who were sent to spy out Jericho (Ja 2:1-9; 6:23; Js 2:25,26). **32**

received the spies with peace.

32 ¶ And what more will I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also David and Samuel and the prophets,

33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; from weakness were made strong; became valiant in war, *and* turned to flight foreign armies.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, so that they might obtain a better resurrection.

36 And others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, also of bonds and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned. They were sawn asunder. They were tempted. They were slain with

the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented –

38 *men* of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth.

39 ¶ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided some better thing for us, so that they apart from us would not be made perfect.

Chapter 12

1 ¶ Therefore, seeing we are also surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set be-

Gideon: See Jg 6-8. **Barak:** See Jg 4,5. **Samson:** See Jg 13-16. **Jephthah:** See Jg 11; 12:1-7; **David:** See 1 Sm 16,17. **Samuel:** See 1 Sm 7:9-14. **33-38 Who through faith:** God responded to these heroes of faith by fulfilling their hope that He had promised to take care of them. They trusted in God, and God worked in fulfillment of their trust. The point of the Hebrew writer is that God worked in the lives of those who had faith in His work. These persecutions through which the patriarchs went manifested the great faith they had in the promises of God (See Gn 39:20; 1 Sm 18:11; 19:10-12; 1 Kg 17:17-24; 21:13; 22:24-28; 2 Kg 4:18-37; 2 Ch 18:26; 24:20,21; Jr 20:2; 26; 37:15; Dn 3:23-28; 6:22; At 7:58; 22:25). **A better resurrection:** Since God had promised a rest that was beyond this world, then they concluded that there must be a resurrection of the body in order to enjoy this rest (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8). The strength of their hope was manifested by the extremity of persecution and hardships through which they went in order to be faithful to God. **39,40 Did not receive the promise:** They walked by faith without having been rewarded in the present for their persistent faith (See vs 13). **Some better thing for us:** The Old Testament heroes of faith did not have the privilege of knowing the love sacrifice of Christ on the cross, though they unknowingly participated in the effects of His blood (See 9:15; Rm 3:25). All the people of God since the cross, however, have the blessing of knowing that God has given His only begotten Son (Ti 2:11). Those of this gospel dispensation, therefore, have something better. That better thing they have is a greater knowledge of God's promises in that He has fulfilled the promise of the blessing that was given to Abraham and the fathers (Gn 12:1-3). Since God has fulfilled the promise of giving His only begotten Son, then surely He will bring about the promise of heaven that is yet to come (5:9). Our knowledge of His fulfillment of the promises to the Old

Testament fathers is evidence that He will do the same in reference to the promises that have been made concerning heaven. The writer's point is that we must have faith in the future because of our faith in the testimony of those in the past who affirmed that God fulfills His promises.

Chapter 12

CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE

1 A cloud of witnesses: The witnesses are those of the previous chapter. They completed the race by remaining faithful to God. They are now expecting Christians to finish the race (Compare 1 Co 9:24-27; 1 Tm 6:12; 2 Tm 4:7). **Lay aside ... sin:** Runners would carry weights in order to strengthen their muscles for the race. The weights, however, would weigh them down where they could not run at their full potential. When the final race arrived, they laid their weights aside. All sin hinders one's faithfulness in running the Christian race. In this context, the sin that the readers must lay aside is their doubt concerning God's faithfulness to keep His promises. It is doubt that hinders Christians from zealously doing that which God requires of an active faith (Js 1:5-8; 2:14-26). **Run with endurance:** One must, as the Old Testament patriarchs, persevere in the Christian race (10:36,39; 1 Co 9:27; Gl 2:2; Rm 12:12). One's run must be consistent and enduring (See 10:39). If one is not actively engaged in the race, then he is in a state of falling away. Indifference and stalemate are only stages of digression. If one continues in indifference as a stagnant Christian, he will digress to an inactive faith that will lead to creating an inactive religion after his own laziness. It is this type of religion that will lead one to destruction. **2 Looking unto Jesus:** If one takes his mind off Jesus, he will be diverted to other things, and thus, discontinue his participation in the race.

fore Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 ¶ For consider Him who endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you not grow weary and faint in your minds.

4 You have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed *in* striving against sin.

5 And you have forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as to children, “*My son, do not despise the disciplining of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him.*”

6 *For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives.”*

7 ¶ If you endure discipline, God deals with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had fathers of our flesh who corrected *us*, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

10 For they indeed for a few days disciplined *us* according to what seemed best to them. But He *disciplines us* for *our* benefit so that we might be partakers of His holiness.

It is essential, therefore, that every Christian focus his attention on Jesus who has gone before and is waiting for us in the heavenly realm. Jesus has suffered and passed through the veil into heaven (4:15; Lk 24:26; Ph 2:8). He has given us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pt 2:21). **Author:** This could be translated “originator” or “pioneer.” Jesus originated faith and pioneered the way to heaven (Jn 14:6). He is the one who has ventured through suffering, entered behind the veil, and thus, is the author who perfects our faith (2:10; 6:20; 10:20). **For the joy ... endured the cross:** Because of what He saw before Him, Jesus endured the hostility of those who worked against Him during His ministry (Mt 10:24; Jn 15:20; see Lk 24:26; Ps 69:7,19; Ph 2:8). He saw before Him His heavenly dwelling and work on behalf of all those who would be redeemed through His blood sacrifice. His joy of what the cross would accomplish motivated Him to carry out His destiny. And so it should be with every Christian. The Christian must look forward to the glory that is yet to be revealed (Rm 8:18). His hope of heaven should be strong enough to motivate him to remain in the race regardless of the sufferings of this present world. **Right hand of God:** Because He finished the race, Jesus received the reward of King of kings and Lord of lords at the position of authority over all things (8:1; Ps 110:1; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). **3 Consider Him who endured:** When Christians think that they are suffering too much for Jesus, then they should think of all the things through which Jesus endured on their behalf (Mt 10:24; 1 Pt 2:21). It would do Bible students well to make a study of the tools of discouragement that Satan used against Jesus throughout His ministry. Not only would one learn how Satan works in one’s own life, but such would also give encouragement to follow the example of the Lord to which He has given His life. One must consider the sufferings of Jesus lest he become discouraged, and thus, not finish the race (Gl 6:9). **4 Bloodshed:** No reader had yet lost his life in the heat of the persecution that seems to now have come upon them (See 1 Co 10:13; Rv 2:10). Even if they had, such would still not be a reason for turning from their conviction. One’s physical life is surely of little value in comparison to the eternal life that one will receive in the presence of God (Ti 1:2). **5,6 The disciplining of the Lord:** The writer referred to these quotations from Proverbs in order to remind them that God uses the work of Satan who insti-

gates persecution and hardships in order to discipline His children (See Pv 3:11,12; compare Pv 22:15; 23:13; 29:15). God deals with His children as a parent deals with his child. Discipline is for correction, education and growth. God’s discipline, therefore, should not be rejected or scorned. Discipline is for the purpose of molding our characters in order that we be prepared for eternal dwelling (See Dt 8:5; Jb 5:17; Ps 94:12; Js 1:12). While in persecution, therefore, one must remember that the love of God is being manifested in one’s life because God is using the situation in order to mold one for eternal dwelling. Those who complain to God during times of trial do not yet understand how God uses tribulations in order to prepare one for heaven. God wants no spoiled children in heaven, and thus, discipline is necessary in order to train our minds to be able to dwell with Jesus who suffered the same tribulations (See Ps 94:12; Rv 3:19). **7** This verse is a good question that each Christian must answer. If one is not chastened by the Lord, therefore, He is not a son. For this reason, therefore, Christians should not despise the chastening of the Lord (See Dt 8:5; 2 Sm 7:14; Pv 13:24; 19:18; 23:13). They must see their discipline as evidence that they are children of God. **8 Illegitimate and not sons:** Herein is the writer’s point in reference to the tribulations under which the readers were evidently now going. The true son accepts correction from the Father. He understands that the correction is not coming from a fiendish or unloving father. He understands that because of love the father administers the discipline. Therefore, the readers’ acceptance of the discipline from God is proof of their sonship. If there were no discipline, then there would be no sonship. **9 Respect:** An earthly son gives respect to the father even though the father administers the discipline. The son respects the father because he does give him the discipline. No father receives respect from his son if he does not discipline the son for misbehavior. **Father of our spirits:** God is the one who has created our spirits (Nm 16:22; 27:16; Jb 12:10; Ec 12:7). It is from Him that we receive our very existence. This truth in the context of this subject is appropriate. Since God is the Father of our very existence, then certainly we must respect Him in times of tribulation. He has created us in a way that we grow in character when we endure the struggles of this world. **10** While we were in the days of our youth, our earthly fathers disciplined us according to their judgment. Our

11 Now no discipline seems to be joyous at the time, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

12 ¶ Therefore, strengthen the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather be healed.

14 ¶ Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man will see the Lord.

15 Looking carefully lest any man falls short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it

many be defiled;

16 lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it with tears.

18 ¶ For you have not come to a mountain that might be touched and that burned with fire, nor to blackness and darkness and tempest;

19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, which *voice* they that heard begged

heavenly Father's chastisement is continued throughout our lifetime as a Christian in order that we be suitable personalities that can dwell in a heavenly environment. Through chastisement on earth, therefore, we develop a personality that has the ability to enjoy heaven. **11** At the time one is enduring the tribulation, there seems to be no joy. It is unpleasant (See Is 32:17; 2 Tm 4:8; Js 3:17,18). However, when one recognizes that the chastisement is necessary for his spiritual growth, then he can count it with joy (See comments Js 1:2,3). When one counts it with joy to be chastised in order to be prepared for heaven, then he will not become bitter or complain in times of chastisement (See Rm 8:28; Js 3:18).

ENCOURAGEMENT TO BE HOLY

12,13 *Strengthen the hands that hang down:*

See comments Gl 6:1,2; see Is 35:3; Jb 4:3,4; Pv 4:26. Christianity is a community of believers who have obligations to one another (10:24,25; Gl 6:10). These obligations include both physical and emotional needs. It was God's purpose in the establishment of the church to provide a haven for the preservation of individuals who have obeyed the gospel. The haven was prepared in order to preserve on earth those who would eventually dwell eternally with God. The church, therefore, offers the close fellowship that is needed in order that every individual member be in a situation wherein he or she can be encouraged to remain faithful (10:24,25). In the context of church fellowship, the stronger members are to exhort the weak in order that they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (Compare comments Rm 14). **14** *Follow peace:* The writer here explains how the fellowship of the family of God is to function. In order to maintain the fellowship, each member must seek to be at peace with his brother (Ps 34:14; 2 Tm 2:2; see comments Rm 14; 1 Co 9; Gl 5:22,23). Each member must be known for being forbearing with others (Ph 4:5). Forbearance of one another's faults produces an atmosphere in which spiritual growth can occur (2 Pt 3:18; see Js 4:1-12). *Pursue ... holiness:* The holy life is separated from the ways of the world. In this statement, it is a behavior of life that the believer makes a choice to accept and live (See Ps 34:14). *See the Lord:* Without a separated life from the conduct of the world, no one will in this life perceive who the Lord is, and surely, no unholy person will step into the realm of heavenly

dwelling (See Mt 5:8; 2 Co 7:1; 1 Th 4:7; Rv 21:8; 22:15).

15 The advantage of being a member of the community of God is the responsibility of Christians caring for one another in reference to maintaining their faithfulness to the Lord. *Falls short of the grace:* This statement would certainly indicate that it is possible for a child of God to fall from the grace of God so as to be lost. Since it is possible for a Christian to fall outside the realm of where God's grace is applicable to his life, then it is imperative that every Christian assume the responsibility to approach his brother when he sees his brother sinning a sin that is unto death (See 3:12; 4:1; 10:24,25; 13:17; Gl 6:1; see comments 1 Jn 5:16). The fact that Christians can fall from the grace of God assumes that Christians have the responsibility of helping one another to be faithful. Christians, therefore, should guard themselves against falling away and help their fellow brothers and sisters from doing the same (See comments Gl 5:4; 2 Pt 2:20-22). **16** *Lest there be:* As in the case of Esau, a situation is often needed to provide an opportunity for one's inward motives to be manifested (See Gn 25:29-34; 27:34-38; see comments 1 Co 11:19). The writer here teaches that one may have the heart of a fornicator. He may not have committed an act of fornication, but when given the opportunity, the fornication that is in his heart will move him to commit the act (See comments Mt 5:28). The holy heart does not harbor motives of sin. It is for this reason that Christians should be in fasting, prayer and confession with one another in order to deal with inner emotions that could possibly lead to sin if the opportunity presented itself (Js 1:14,15; 5:16). **17** *Afterward ... rejected:* Because of a single uncontrollable urge to satisfy his fleshly lust, Esau gave up the advantages of his birthright as the firstborn son. Once the birthright was given up, he could not reclaim it. The writer's illustration is a warning to any Christian who might exchange his right to heaven by giving himself over to sin. When a Christian willfully gives himself over to sin, he has given up any right to heaven (10:26,27).

MOUNT SINAI AND ZION

18-21 *The mountain:* When the nation of Israel came to Mount Sinai, God commanded them not to draw near to the mountain nor touch it (See Ex 19:12-19; 20:18-21; Dt 4:11; 5:22). The mountain was unapproachable because the glory of God rested upon it. The people

that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.

20 For they could not endure what was commanded, “*And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.*”

21 And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, “*I exceedingly fear and tremble.*”

22 ¶ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *ones* who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

24 and to Jesus, the mediator of the new cov-

enant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *the blood* of Abel.

25 ¶ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape when they refused Him who spoke on earth, much less *will we escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven.

26 His voice then shook the earth. But now He has promised, saying, “*Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*”

27 And this *word*, “*Yet once more,*” signifies the removing of those things that can be shaken, as of things that are created, so that those things that cannot be shaken may remain.

feared greatly because they recognized that they were in the presence of God. It would have certainly been an awesome sight to behold. Even Moses was stricken with fear as God appeared on the mountain of Sinai in order to deliver His commandments to the people (Dt 9:19). **22 Mount Zion:** In contrast to Mount Sinai that provoked fear and was not allowed to be touched by the people of Israel, the heavenly Jerusalem, the “new Jerusalem” (Rv 3:12; 21:2), is approachable by those who submit to the grace of God. Reference here is to the heavenly dwelling of Christians wherein they will be in the presence of God for eternity. **Angels:** Angelic beings are stated here to surround the throne of God in heaven (Dt 33:2; Dn 7:10; Rv 5:11). **23 General assembly:** This would be the joyful gathering or festival gathering. **Church of the first born:** This would be the assembly of the firstborn ones whose names are written in the book of life. **Written:** The metaphor here is given to be a message of security and reassurance to the readers. Christians must remember that their names are recorded in heaven (Ph 4:3; Rv 21:27). However, they are not literally recorded in a sense of being written on a ledger so as to be remembered by God. God would not need to write the names of the saved in order to remember them. The metaphor is taken from Roman cities where a register was kept in which was written the names of the citizens. **Judge of all:** God will judge all men through Jesus (At 17:31; see Gn 18:25; Ps 50:6; 94:2). **Spirits of just men:** These would be those departed saints who are now in the protection of God in the presence of Jesus (See comments 2 Co 5:8; Ph 1:23; 1 Th 4:12,13). They have left this world in the spirit, and thus, are in Abraham’s bosom (See comments Lk 16:19-31). **24 Mediator of the new covenant:** Moses mediated for Israel when the first covenant was given on Mount Sinai. As the Son of God, Jesus works at the right hand of God as a mediator on behalf of all Christians (8:6; 9:15; 1 Tm 2:5). **The blood of sprinkling:** When the first covenant was inaugurated, the blood of animals was sprinkled on the people in order to bring them into covenant relationship with God (See 9:18-22; 10:27). Now it is the blood of the Son of God that cleanses us of sin and brings us into covenant relationship with God (At 20:28).

TAKE HEED TO LISTEN

25 In contrast to those under the Old Testament law who were hardened, and thus, refused to listen to the commandments of God, Christians must be cautious to listen to God’s instructions. God speaks to us today through Jesus, and thus, we must listen to the word of Jesus (1:1,2; 2:1; Jn 12:48). **Did not escape:** Those who did not listen to Moses did not escape the punishment of God (2:1-4; 10:28-31). If they did not escape, then certainly one will not escape the punishment of the God who speaks out of heaven and judges the hearts of men (See Mt 17:5). **26** When God spoke out of heaven at Mount Sinai, the earth shook (Ex 19:18; Ps 68:8). The shaking of the earth brought Israel’s attention to the fact that God was present and that all Israel must give heed to His speaking. **Yet once more I shake ... earth ... heaven:** In the context of the quotation of Haggai 2:6, Haggai was encouraging the rebuilders of the temple not to be discouraged concerning the passing of the former temple that had been destroyed by Babylon. God promised through Haggai the building of another temple. In prophesying the spiritual temple that was to come, Haggai said, “*The glory of this later temple shall be greater than the former*” (Hg 2:9). The Hebrews were a part of the glorious temple, the church of the firstborn ones who had come out of sin and into covenant relationship with God (See 1 Co 3:16,17). This glorious temple was established in Acts 2 when about 3,000 people first submitted to the lordship of its Builder (At 2:41,47; see Mt 16:18,19). **27 Removing of those things that can be shaken:** What was being shaken away was the Old Testament law and covenant. In this context it seems that the writer is looking to the near future when the Jewish State and all its ceremonial religiosity will be shaken away in order that the true sons of God might shine forth in the kingdom of Jesus (See comments Mt 13:36-43). It is true also that the material world in which we now live will be shaken by God in order to terminate its existence for the new heavens and earth that is yet to come (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-13). When God shakes, that which is unrighteous is shaken out in order that the righteous continue. **28 We are receiving a kingdom:** One receives the kingdom reign of Jesus when he voluntarily submits to

28 ¶ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

29 For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Chapter 13

1 ¶ Let brotherly love continue.

2 Do not neglect to entertain strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

3 Remember those who are in chains as *though* bound with them, *and* those who suffer ill-treatment, since you yourselves also are in the body.

4 ¶ Marriage *is* honorable among all, and the bed undefiled. But fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

5 ¶ *Let your behavior be* without covetousness, *and be content* with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*”

6 So we may boldly say, “*The Lord is my helper and I will not fear. What will man do to me?*”

7 ¶ Remember those who are leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* behavior.

8 Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and to-

the kingship of Jesus. He allows the word of God to be done on earth in his heart as it is done in heaven (See comments Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). The writer's exhortation here is that since faithful readers were allowing the kingdom reign of Jesus to permeate their hearts, they must allow the grace of God to move their lives to reverential service of God (13:15,21). **29 A consuming fire:** Fire consumes. It terminates the usefulness of that which is burned. Christians must remember that it is God who can terminate the existence of those who are disobedient to His will (See comments Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9).

Chapter 13

WELL-PLEASING SERVICE TO GOD

In this chapter the writer concludes with instructions concerning holy living. These are general practices each Christian must put into action in his life in order to be well-pleasing to God. **1 Brotherly love:** This is the foundation upon which relationships are based. It is the qualification for one who will dwell with God in eternity (Rm 12:10; 1 Pt 1:22). If one does not feel comfortable with his brethren here on earth, then he is not a candidate for heaven (See comments 1 Jn 3:10-23). The more brethren are together on earth, therefore, the more one can determine if he is of a nature that can dwell in eternity with brethren. **2 Entertain strangers:** Hospitality is a characteristic of those who have understood the principle of love (Mt 25:35; Rm 12:13; 1 Tm 3:2; 1 Pt 4:9). One's brotherly love must extend beyond those he personally knows. It must extend to those who are passing through one's area. This practice of the early Christians was a means by which the evangelists could go forth and preach the gospel (See comments At 18:1-3; 3 Jn). **Entertained angels:** This could refer to the heavenly messengers of God, as some in the Old Testament entertained (See Gn 18:1-22; 19:1; Jg 6:11ff; 13:2ff). The Greek word that is used here is *angelos*. This is the word that is most often used in the New Testament for angels. However, the word *angelos* is also used in reference to the evangelists of the Lord as they went forth to preach the gospel (See the use of *angelos* in Mt 11:10; 24:31; Lk 7:24). **3 The prisoners:** These were those who were in bonds

for the preaching of the gospel (See 10:34; Mt 25:36). Because the church is one body and not divided into denominational groups, our responsibility in prayer extends beyond the limits of those with whom we have personal fellowship. The church is universal, and thus, Christians have universal obligations toward Christians throughout the world. **4 Marriage is to be kept honorable** in the fellowship of the saints (Pv 5:18,19). The church must not be influenced by the unholy sexual relationships that are prevalent in society. No unbiblical relationship between a man and woman that may exist in society must ever find its way into the fellowship of the church. Though fornication, adultery and polygamy be practiced by those in the world, such should never be characteristic of the relationships of those in the church (See 1 Co 6:9; Gl 5:19-21; 1 Th 4:6). **5,6 Without covetousness:** The conduct of the Christian in the community must be of a nature that is not driven by the love of money (Lk 12:15-21; Ep 5:3-5; 1 Tm 6:9,10,17-19). On the contrary, Christians must be known for being satisfied with those things they have (Mt 6:24-34; Ph 4:11,12). **Never forsake you:** The foundation upon which contentment is based is the knowledge that God has provided one with what he has (See Gn 28:14; 31:7,8; Ja 1:5; 1 Ch 28:20). When one realizes that what he has is the blessing of God who promised that He would never forsake His flock, then he becomes content with what he has because his blessings are what God feels is sufficient for his earthly dwelling. **My helper:** The writer is here giving assurance to the readers. Christians must understand that they have God in their lives. He is helping them (See Ps 27:1; 118:6). Paul asked, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Rm 8:32). The answer to the question is that no one can be against those in whom God is working to do His will (Ph 2:12,13; 4:13). He who works in us is greater than Satan who works in the world. Every Christian must be assured that the power of God is always greater than the work of Satan. Therefore, Christians must remain faithful in the battle because they have already received the victory.

7 Leading you: The Greek word here is *hagoumenon*. The same word is used in verses 17,24 and Acts 15:22. In Acts 15:22 it is stated that Barsabas and Silas were “leading” (*hagoumenon*) men among the brethren. The word should be translated the same here.

day and forever.

9 Do not be carried about with various and strange teachings. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established by grace, not with foods that have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

10 ¶ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.

12 Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered

outside the gate.

13 Therefore, let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

14 For here we do not have a continuing city, but we seek one to come.

15 Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.

16 But do not forget doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.

17 ¶ Obey those who lead you and be submissive, for they watch for your souls as those

The writer is stating that the readers should submit to the leadership of those who are teaching the word to them (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). They must follow the example of the faith of these teachers of the word who have determined in their lives to preach the gospel to the lost and edify the saved. **End of their behavior:** The result of their behavior is their eternal salvation. For this reason, these who have set themselves to minister the word must be followed because of the instructions they give from the word of God (2:3; 6:12; 1 Co 11:1; 1 Th 1:6,7). The writer gives these instructions in the context of the early evangelists who were directly inspired by the Spirit. There were no written New Testaments among the churches. Therefore, it was the Spirit working through the prophets who delivered the spoken word of God to the churches. **8** In this context, reference is to the teaching of Jesus. Since Jesus is unchanging in His eternity, then His teachings are unchanging. The word that the prophets were teaching was unchanging, and thus, should be heeded by those to whom the prophets spoke. **9 Do not be carried about:** One must be stable in his beliefs in the sense of not being affected by the theologies and philosophies of the society in which he lives. Each Christian must allow himself to be equipped in order that he not be tossed to and fro with varying winds of false teaching (See comments Ep 4:11-16; see Cl 2:4,8; 2 Tm 4:3,4; 2 Jn 9). Since it is possible for one to be carried away with false teaching, it is important that one believe the truth and that he guards that which he does believe (Cl 2:21). For this reason, every Christian must be a student of the word of God. He must measure every teaching by what he personally studies in the Bible (At 17:11).

Established by grace: One is established in the sense that his response to the grace of God leads him to obey the One from whom all grace has come. When one's faith is in the grace of God, then he establishes the law of God in his heart in response to God's grace (See comments Rm 3:31). **Not with foods:** It makes no difference in a religious sense what one eats for food. The eating of certain foods by the Jews had religious significance. However, when one becomes a Christian, all foods must be recognized as clean and originating from God (Rm 14:17; 1 Co 8:8; 1 Tm 4:3). **10,11** One of the great blessings of the new covenant and law is the fact that Christians do not have to offer animal sacrifices (See 10:10-14). Since Jesus died for our sins once and for all time, there is no need for the futile offer-

ing of animal sacrifices which cannot take away sin (10:1-4). **Outside the camp:** The bodies of the sacrifices of the Old Testament were burned outside the camp (See Lv 16:27). When the temple was constructed, the bodies of the animals were burned outside the gates of the city. **12 Suffered outside the gate:** As the bodies of the animal sacrifices were burned outside the gate, so Jesus suffered outside the city of Jerusalem for the sins of the people (At 7:58). However, in contrast to the blood of animals that could not sanctify (9:12; 10:1-4), the blood of Jesus sanctified those who were obedient to the gospel (10:10,14,29). **13** The Jewish readers to whom the writer is addressing this letter, must break their ties with the ceremonial Judaism from which they were converted. They must marry themselves to Christ (Rm 7:1-4), and thus, go with Jesus outside the city of ceremonial Judaism. In doing so, they would have to accept the same reproach that was heaped upon Jesus when He went to the cross on Golgotha (1 Pt 2:21,22; 4:14). **14 Not have a continuing city:** The Jewish Christians' faith must not be in the physical Jerusalem and temple. Jerusalem and the temple were to be done away in only a few years from the time of the writing of this letter (See comments Mt 24). On the other hand, the heavenly city wherein is registered the citizenship of every Christian is a continuing city that is eternal in the heavens (11:10). **15 Continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God:** Because of what Jesus did for us through the cross, we must be motivated to respond with the continual offering of ourselves. The response to the grace of God, therefore, is the offering of one's self to God through sacrificial living (See comments Rm 12:1,2; see Ep 5:20; Ph 4:18). **Fruit of our lips:** The speech of the grateful Christian is given in praise to God through the name of Jesus (See Is 57:19; Hs 14:2). **16 Doing good:** Christians must do that which is good to all men, but especially to those who are Christians (Gl 6:10; see Rm 12:13; Cl 3:17). Since Jesus made the sacrifice of incarnation and death on the cross, Christians should be moved to sacrifice in thanksgiving to God (2 Co 9:12; Ph 4:18).

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

17 Lead: As in verse 7 and 24, the Greek word here refers to leading at it is so translated in At 15:22 in reference to Barsabas and Silas. As is explained in verse 7, Christians must give themselves to those who lead through the preaching and teaching of the word

who must give account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

18 ¶ Pray for us. For we are sure we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.

19 But I urge *you* all the more to do this so that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20 ¶ Now the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 equip you in every good work to do His

will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

22 ¶ And I urge you, brethren, bear this word of exhortation, for I have written a letter to you in few words.

23 Know that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he comes shortly, I will see you.

24 ¶ Greet all those who lead you, and all the saints. Those from Italy salute you.

25 ¶ Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

(See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). **Submissive:** The submission here is not as to a dictator who leads by instilling fear within the hearts of those who are to follow. Emphasis is on one submitting to the example and teaching of another's life. The verse explains what is meant. **They watch:** Those who have given themselves to the preaching and teaching of the word of God have given themselves to the responsibility of leading people through the word of God. Their leadership, therefore, is in what they say and live. They thus give account for the souls of those they lead by what they have taught and lived in their own lives (See comments Js 3:1). **With joy and not with grief:** If the submission in this context is to those who are supposedly invested with authoritarian rule over others, then when the autocratic leader's "rule" is rejected, he will respond with frustration and anger, not grief. The type of leadership that is under consideration here is the type that leads by servanthood. If the leadership of the servant leader is rejected, he suffers grief, not frustration or anger. As in 1 Corinthians 16:15,16, the admonition here is to the church. It is the responsibility of the church to submit to the teaching leadership of those who have given themselves to lead through word and servanthood behavior. Their submission, therefore, is to the word of God that is taught through the messenger who teaches and lives his message (See comments 1 Tm 4:12). **18 Pray for us:** The writer again emphasizes the fact that the brotherhood of believers extends beyond the assembly of any local group of disciples. Through fasting and prayer our consideration is manifested to the saints throughout the world (Rm 15:30; Ep 6:19; Cl 4:3; 2 Th 3:1). **19 That I may be restored to you the sooner:** In this case, God could answer the prayer so as to return the writer to those to whom he writes. How God could do this without working a miracle is His business. Christians must believe that God is able to work behind the scenes of natural law so as to bring about an answer to their prayers. If this passage says that through prayer God is able to bring the writer to the readers, then we must believe that God can so work in the lives of Christians today. **20,21 From the dead:** God raised Jesus from the dead in order to seat Him at His right hand (Ep 1:20-22; see Ps 16:10,11; Hs 6:2; Rm 4:24; Gl 1:1). **Shepherd of the sheep:** It is Jesus who is the shepherd who cares for the sheep (Ps 23:1; Is 40:11; 63:11; Jn 10:11; 1 Pt 2:24; 5:4). **Through the blood:** Through His blood Jesus cared for the sin problem of the sheep

(Zc 9:11; Mt 26:26-29; Hb 10:29). **In every good work:** The good works of Christians are not in vain in Christ who offered Himself for our sins (1 Co 15:58). We are thus perfected through the blood of Jesus (See comments Cl 1:28; see 1 Pt 5:10). When we respond to the sacrificial blood of Jesus on the cross, then it is God who is working in us (See comments Ph 2:12,13). **22 Bear this word:** They must not despise the teaching of the word which was being written to them in this letter (See comments Ep 4:30; 1 Th 5:19,20). Neither must they despise the teaching of the word by those leaders who were going about edifying the church. When one rejects the teaching of the word, he has become dull of hearing (See comments 5:11,12). He is thus rejecting God's instructions. **Few words:** If one despised what had been written through this epistle, then he was rejecting the instructions of God. Many other things could have been written on the subjects of this letter. Therefore, in comparison to what could have been written, the writer wrote in only a few words. **23 Timothy is set at liberty:** Timothy was surely one for whom they had prayed in the past that he be set free from prison (vs 18,19). From this statement, we assume that Timothy was at one time imprisoned for preaching the gospel (Compare 1 Tm 6:12). It is also apparent that the readers knew Timothy well. Since Timothy was a close fellow-worker with Paul, it is assumed that Paul was the author of this letter. If this is true, then the prayer the writer requested in verses 18,19 that he be set free, could refer to the first imprisonment of Paul, from which he was eventually set free. The letter, therefore, could have been written around A.D. 61,62 during the first imprisonment of Paul. **24,25 Greet all those who lead:** The Greek word for "rule" here is the same that is used in verses 7,17 and Acts 15:22. Herein is the commentary on what is meant in verses 7 and 17. The writer asked the readers to "greet" these who lead. The implication is, therefore, that these leaders ("rulers") were not commonly present among the immediate readers as leaders. The reference would thus be to the evangelists who were going about from church to church teaching as Barsabas and Silas. Barsabas and Silas were leading brethren because they were evangelists who went about teaching by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (At 15:22). It was the responsibility of the early church, therefore, to submit to these inspired teachers, for they were prophets who spoke the word of God by inspiration (1 Co 16:15,16; see comments 3 Jn 1-8).

The Letter Of James

Author

It is believed by most Bible students that the author who identifies himself in this letter as a servant of Jesus Christ (1:1) is the Lord's brother whom Paul mentions in Galatians 1:19. Throughout the New Testament there is mention of at least five different individuals who carry the name of James. (1) There is James, the son of Alphaeus, who was one of the twelve Christ-called and sent apostles (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; At 1:13). (2) There is James who was also one of the twelve whose brother was Judas (not Judas Iscariot) (Lk 6:16). (3) There is the James who is mentioned in Mark 15:40 (See Mt 27:56; Jn 19:25). (4) There is James, the son of Zebedee and brother of the apostle John (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:17; Lk 6:14; At 1:13). (5) Finally, there is James the brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). It is this James that many believe was the inspired author of this epistle (See Jn 7:5; At 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Co 15:7; Gl 2:9).

The apostle James was killed early in the history of the church and before this letter was written (At 12:1,2). James, the brother of Jesus, became a prominent leader in the church in Jerusalem after he overcame his early unbelief during the ministry of Jesus (Jn 7:5; At 15:13; Gl 1:19). Because of the Jewish nature of this letter, it is believed that James, the Lord's brother, wrote this letter to disciples who were of Jewish background.

Date

It is believed that James who wrote this book was martyred around A.D. 63. Therefore, the book is dated by Bible students anywhere from A.D. 45 to 63. However, the nature of the content of the book concerning the Jewish problem in the church and the statements concerning the coming of the Lord in judgment on national Israel (5:7,8), indicates that the book was probably written in the early or middle 60s. In his exhortations to encourage the faithful brethren, James wrote that they be patient for the coming of the Lord that was at hand (5:8). Since the Lord was coming in judgment on national Israel in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24, then the more probable date of writing would be the early or middle 60s.

Theme

In contrast to the nature of the rich among the brethren whom James sharply condemns for their hypocritical living, James contrasts the behavior of the rich with the virtues of true Christianity. There were those who had deceived themselves into believing that they could profess a form of Christianity, and yet, relieve themselves of the responsibilities of fellowship that are inherent within the community of God. James exhorts that his readers be doers of the word (1:22). This principle is followed by James' definition of the nature of true Christianity, that is, it reflected in caring for others (1:27).

Historical Background

After the establishment of the church in Jerusalem, James became a prominent leader of the church in Judea. The Jerusalem church was primarily composed of Jews who were converted from Judaism. Therefore, because of the cultural environment in which the Jerusalem church dwelt, the church was evidently intimidated to maintain a strong Jewish culture (See comments At 21:15-25). The Jews in Judea were becoming more arrogant and militant toward the occupation of the Roman Empire in the 60s, and thus, the church in Judea was in a very precarious cultural environment. The hostility of the Jews toward Rome eventually grew to the point where Rome decided to eliminate the Jewish problem of the Empire. A military campaign was thus launched against the Jews. The military campaign continued until the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). Therefore, when studying those New Testament documents that were written during the 60s, we must keep in mind the struggles of Jewish brethren in the Judean area. We must keep in mind that the Judean church struggled in an environment where the tension between Rome and national Israel increased until A.D. 70.

Since most of the members of the Judean church were Jews, their unconverted friends, family and business acquaintances would certainly have exerted great pressure on them to conform to the Jewish mood of the day to rebel against the Roman occupation of Palestine. Since James was a leader of the Judean churches for several years, it would only be natural for him during the last days of national Israel to write a letter to Jewish Christians throughout the Roman Empire. In view of the impending calamity of the destruction of national Israel, his letter is directed to Jewish Christians throughout the Empire in order to focus their attention on the Lord Jesus Christ as opposed to arro-