

HEBREWS

WRITER

Because the Spirit-inspired writer of this letter does not identify himself, it is difficult to determine who actually wrote the letter. Most Bible students agree that the writer was Paul. However, Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Silas and others have also been suggested as possible authors. There are several reasons why it is believed that Paul was the writer. (1) The literary style and contents of the book reflect both the style of writing and subjects that Paul usually addresses in his writings. (2) The early church writers as Eusebius and Origen affirmed 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 are not final concerning the Pauline authorship of the letter, they do support his authorship sufficiently to conclude that he was the actual writer.

DATE

The oldest New Testament manuscripts entitle this letter “Hebrews.” The initial readers were of Jewish heritage because of the great emphasis in the letter on the Sinai law. The recipients were former Jews who had been converted to Christ. They had been Christians for some time (See 2:1-4; 5:12). There is a great emphasis in the book on the subject of the temple and the Sinai law that God gave to Israel (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).

By the time the letter was written, the recipients had endured the initial persecution of Christians that was led by those still in the bondage of Judaism (10:32-34; see comments of Gl). 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 was 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. The tension of these efforts occurred in the 60s, and thus, we would assign the date of writing to middle 60s.

THEME

The theme of the book addresses the great intimidation that was facing the recipients. Though we do not understand all the historical environment of the initial recipients, there was a movement among them to return to the security of the institutional structures of Judaism. In order to counter this apostasy, the writer affirmed the superiority of the new covenant over the old because of the sufficient priesthood of Jesus. For this reason, the writer affirmed that our salvation is by faith in Christ as opposed to trusting in the sacrifices of the Sinai law (See ch 11).

PURPOSE

It seems that the Jewish Christians to whom the letter was directed were on the verge of returning to their former religion of Judaism (See comments Gl 1:13,14). At the time of writing, it was not simply the Sinai law to which they were returning. They were turning to the ceremonial structures of Judaism. They had walked by faith in Christ

for some time. However, in the trying times in which they lived they were questioning their faith, and thus, were seeking to return to religious structures that they believed would give them a sense of security. They were thus following their desire for external institutional religious structures of a former religion that brought them a sense of security. In addressing this apostasy, the writer did not deal specifically with the man-made structures and traditions of Judaism, but focused on the foundation of Judaism, the Sinai law and priesthood (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

The reason the recipients may have been on the verge of apostasy was because of persecution by the nationalistic Jews of the society in which they lived. The intimidation to return to Judaism may have come 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 Sinai law and its shadows were given in order to bring Israel to the priesthood of Jesus and the new covenant (See 10:1-10). The Sinai law was given in order to preserve national Israel until the Messiah came into the world and the establishment of His priesthood. The old law was thus a means to an end, but not the end. Now that the new priesthood had come through Jesus and the new covenant, the law had fulfilled its purpose. It was thus taken away (10:9,10). The writer’s arguments to substantiate the better covenant under which Christians live focus on (1) the supremacy of Christ (chs 1,2), (2) the better hope that Christians have of life after death (3:1 - 4:13), (3) the high priesthood of Jesus (4:14 - 7:28), and (4) 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 continued obedience of God’s will (10:19 - 13:25).

Christians often find it difficult to understand why the

Jewish Christians to whom the author wrote would be tempted to return to living under the Sinai law. In the historical setting of the 1st century, the Jewish Christians' apostasy was not based on simply returning to live under the Sinai law. By the time Jesus came, the religion of the Jews had led the people away from God. Paul referred to the religiosity of the Jews as the "Jews' religion," or Judaism (Gl 1:13,14). It was a religious structure of man-made restrictions that had been developed over centuries of apostasy from the simplicity of what God gave to Israel on Mount Sinai. Jesus had charged the religious leaders of His day for rejecting the word of God in order that they might keep their religious traditions (Mk 7:1-9). Paul was previously a part of this apostasy, and thus persecuted the church before his conversion because he thought that Christianity was an apostasy from Judaism.

There is a sense of religious security in adhering to structured religions as Judaism. Such religions bring a sense of fulfillment in keeping prescribed ceremonies. When the adherents to legal-oriented religions keep all the ceremonies, they feel that they have served God, and thus they can assume that they have been faithful.

The Jewish religious leaders had institutionalized the Sinai law. The result was a religion that sought to bring a sense of religious security to the adherents. What resulted, however, was that the people were brought into the bondage of religious mandates that became a burden to everyone. When the early Jews were born into the freedom of Christianity, they left their security of ceremonial religiosity in order to walk by faith. However, some of the early converted Jews sought to bring with them some of the Sinai laws into their new faith. However, the Holy Spirit through Paul wrote a stern letter (Galatians) of rebuke to those who would do such (See comments Gl 5:1).

In Hebrews, the Holy Spirit reasoned with the Jewish

recipients in affirming that the Sinai law found its fulfillment in the new covenant of Jesus. He did not deal directly with the institutional structures that the Jews had added to the Sinai law. He dealt directly with the purpose of the Sinai law, that it was to bring Israel to Christ, and then pass away (See comments Gl 3 & 4). Though some of the Jewish Christians believed that they would find religious security in Judaism, the writer of Hebrews affirmed that the foundation upon which Judaism was constructed was terminated. In the plan of God to bring all men to Jesus, that to which they were seeking to return was passing away as the new was being brought into existence.

Superiority of Christ over the Prophets

(1:1-3)

Chapter 1

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH JESUS

The background of chapter 1 is the recipients reverence for angels. Therefore, the Hebrew writer in this chapter affirms 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.

1:1,2 *In time past:* Throughout the years of His work that is recorded in 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 revealed to those through whom He worked at any time in history. But 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 communicated His will. Throughout the era of human history that is recorded in the

Old Testament, God spoke through chosen men called prophets in order to lead His people by His will. ***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). In the last days of national Israel, God communicated His final instructions to Israel and all men through Jesus. 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 know the will of God (At 4:12). ***Last days:*** According to verse 12, when Jesus comes again, this world will be changed. 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). In the context of national Israel, the “last days” in this context would refer to the end of national Israel (Compare 9:26; At 2:17; 1 Co 10:11; 1 Pt 1:20). The consummation of national Israel was happening at the time this document was being written. The Hebrew writer wanted to reaffirm the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel who prophesied that God would bring Israel to a close (See comments Ez & Dn). God had already terminated the Old Testament law by nailing it to the cross (Cl 2:14). He was now in the process of terminating national Israel, which He did through the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. ***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). Because of who He is, Jesus has been given authority over 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 plan of redemption would be carried out and completed.

1:3 *Image of His nature:* Through the created physical worlds we can understand that God exists and that He is all-powerful (omnipotent) (Rm 1:20). However, we know better the nature and character of God through the incarnation of the Son of God. 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. ***Purified 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 only through Him. The atoning sacrifice was His personal work through His incarnation and death. No man can take credit for what Jesus accomplished through the cross, for the initiative to make the sacrifice came solely from Him. ***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 ancients. 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. There-

fore, the Son of God is in a position of authority. He is in a position of all authority (Mt 28:18). No angel has ever assumed a position of authority at the right hand of God. Only Jesus can be there (8:1; Ps 110:1; Ep 1:20-22). Angels do not have inherent authority. The only authority they have is given to them to carry out a mission for God on earth.

Superiority of Christ over Angels

(1:4 – 2:18)

Outline: (1) Greater than angels (1:4-14), (2) Holding to the great salvation (2:1-4), (3) The Son's humiliation for our sake (2:5-9), (4) Jesus, the author (2:10-13), (5) Deliverance from death (2:14-18)

GREATER THAN ANGELS

1:4 *Better than the angels:* While Jesus was on earth in an emptied position in reference to the Father, He was 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 (Mt 28:18; Ph 2:9,20). He is thus superior to angels. We would assume that the ones to whom the writer addresses these words were 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 existence in eternity during which He accomplished the plan of redemption.

1:5 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 1st century where some sects of Judaism possibly offered worship to angels (See Cl 2:18). When Jesus came, therefore, it would have been tempting to some Jews who became Christians to place angels on the level of

the Son of God. But this would have diminished the appeal of Jesus and the new covenant over the Sinai law and covenant. However, if we maintain the general argument of the entire letter, it would appear that the writer was using the Jews' respect for angels as his first point of argument against returning to the system of religion from which the readers came. They came out of Judaism, which religion gave too much respect for angels in God's work among men. The writer was arguing that 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 through His incarnation. Neither was Jesus' 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 birth by the virgin 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). However, through incarnation into this world, Jesus is the only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). Therefore, the fact that Jesus is the only begotten Son argues that He is greater than angels.

1:6 Worship Him: Worship is to be directed only to

God. It is man's inner reverential awe of the Creator and the One who sustains all things. Since the writer here affirms that Jesus is to be worshiped, even by the angels, he affirms that the Son is God, for only God is to be worshiped (See 1 Pt 3:22; Rv 5:11-13). In the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 32:43, from which the quotation is here taken, the passage refers to God (Compare Ps 97:7). In applying Deuteronomy 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).

1:7 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, which also included angels (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 His control (See comments Jd 6; 2 Pt 2:4). Jesus is now 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). All angels are His servants.

1:8,9 Your throne: Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 45:6,7. He has ascended to the throne of God, and thus, He reigns 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 (1 Tm 6:15). 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, He is now king over all things (Is 61:1,3).

1:10-12 This quotation of Psalm 102:25-27 is given in

order to remind the readers of the 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 Creator of all things continues. Eternality is indigenous with the Son because He is God. Everything that exists must receive power from God in order to continue to exist. It is for this reason that not even angels can be considered to be eternal. As created beings by Jesus, their eternity rests in the upholding power of Jesus. Only God is eternal, and thus, all that now exists receives the opportunity to exist solely from God, the Son. 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). The world continues to exist only because it is sustained by the power of Jesus (vs 3).

1:13 *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 will subjugate all enemies (See comments 1 Co 15:26-28).

1:14 *Ministering spirits:* Angels have been designated by God to be servants. Jesus is now the master of all things. Therefore, it is the work of angels as the servants of Jesus 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). Since Christians are the saints of God, then we assume that angels now function in some way on behalf of Christians.

Chapter 2

HOLDING TO THE GREAT SALVATION

2:1 *We must give 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). As God,

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 because they came to us through Jesus. ***That we do not drift away:*** If one does not give strict attention to the will of God that has been delivered to us 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. Therefore, we have a greater responsibility to keep those things that have been delivered to us (See Lk 12:48). Our greater responsibility assumes that God will demand of us greater things.

2:2,3 *Word spoken through angels:* The Sinai 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 Sinai 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, He will judge all the world through Him because He rules over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 12:48; 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 the Pentecost of A.D. 30, therefore, the disciples 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 substantiate 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. The 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, then there is no need for confirming 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, then 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 expects His word to stand alone in its sufficiency 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 1st 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 faith that is based on the revealed word of truth. God expects His messengers today to know His word well enough to use it as 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 (2 Tm 3:16,17). Those who would ask for confirming miracles today, would be questioning the sufficiency of the word of God to stand alone as its own evidence to be God's revelation to man. Since the word of God was written for study to produce faith, then it must stand alone as the source of our faith. If one needs more miracles to produce faith, then he has denied the all-sufficiency of the word of God to produce faith (See comments Rm 10:17). He has denied that through which God seeks to lead His people.

2:4 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 worked the wonder. The miracle as a sign confirmed the message the messenger 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*, which means "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. The word is used today to explain a host of phenomena in the religiously misguided world that are actually not the miracles we see in the Bible. 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 forming our definition

of miracles. God works today apart from the natural occurrence of natural laws. His work today is a work that we could possibly define as “miraculous,” but not miraculous as those confirming miracles He revealed in order to substantiate the message and messengers in the 1st century. The confirming miracles of the 1st century were recorded for us to study and believe (Jn 20:30,31). Our faith, therefore, is in the Holy Spirit inspired record of the miracles, the Bible, not the supposed miracles that are gossiped among men who have little faith in the inspired Bible. It is indeed a sign of apostasy when men become more excited over supposed wonders they hear from others than those miracles that are recorded in the word of God (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12; 2 Tm 4:3). ***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 1st 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 was 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 through this epistle. Therefore, the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit was to sustain the establishment and growth of the early 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 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 20:30,31). The all-sufficiency of the written word of God is in the fact that it does not need confirmation again through miracles (2 Tm 3:16,17).

HUMILIATION FOR OUR SAKE

Religions of the world create gods after the imagination of the worshipers. These gods are not of the nature that is defined 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. Jesus was not what they Jews had created in their minds that the Messiah should be. He was not their victorious king to lead them in victory against their oppressors. Jesus came as the sacrificial Lamb of God to be offered on a cross for their sins, and the establishment of a spiritual kingdom that was not of this world (Jn 18:36).

2:5 *The world to come:* According to Jewish hopes, this “world to come” referred to the messianic age. Though the writer was living in the real messianic age, he wrote from the standpoint that he and his readers had before this time, and were thus looking forward to the messianic age. The messianic age that had ready come at the time of writing, but nothing had been placed under the control of angels. The prophets spoke of the age to come to be placed under the control of the Messiah, which it had been at the time of writing (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:18-23). Since this age has been placed under the control of the Messiah, then the Messiah is greater than angels.

2:6-8 The quotation of Psalm 8:4-6 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, for the Son of God was the beginning of creation. He was the creator of all things, and thus, as Creator, was above all that was created (Cl 1:16). In this con-

text, the Hebrew writer takes the thought of Psalm 8:4-6 beyond man. Reference is now made to the “Son of Man” who is the Messiah. The animals and earth that the Son of 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 were not placed under angels. Though angels were higher beings 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 by sin lowered themselves (Rm 5:12). Adam suffered the consequences of his sin which meant separation from the tree of life, and thus the consequence of physical death (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 angels. He did not fall by 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, in His resurrection He was exalted above all things, including angels (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-23). 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 biblical concept that is here repeated 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 omnipotent control of Jesus. All that is seen and unseen is 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 Bible students have made concerning the authority and control of Jesus. Though Jesus allows Satan to have his control in order to deceive and wreck the lives of those on earth who rebel against God, 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 insurrectionists 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).

2:9 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 (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 must 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

2:10 *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). No angel originated the salvation of man. Only Jesus enjoys this position. *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).

2:11 *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 whom He has sanctified with His blood (1 Co 12:27).

2:12,13 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 whom God has given to Him, have put their trust in God (Compare Is 53:10; Jn 10:27-29).

DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

2:14,15 *Partook of the same:* Since men were created flesh and blood, it was necessary that Jesus become the same in order to identify with them (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 was introduced into the world through Adam, who was the first person to sin. All who have sinned after the manner of Adam, are separated from God (Is 59:1,2; Rm 5:12). Physical death entered into the world when Adam, and consequently all mankind, were separated from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24; 1 Co 15:20-22). Jesus came to deal with man's physical and spiritual death problems. Through the cross and resurrection He 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 atoning sacrifice (2 Tm 1:10; 1 Jn 3:8,9). His resurrection from the dead has revealed that those who are 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 will die. However, one does not have to fear death when he is 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).

2:16 *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).

2:17 *An atoning sacrifice 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. This work on the part of Jesus would be an atoning sacrifice 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.

2:18 *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 and our frailties (4:15,16). He is able to understand the afflictions of those who are weak because He was tempted by the same afflictions and in the same environment in which all men live. The Christian, therefore, does not have a God who stands afar off from the sufferings of man. He has a God who identified with man in order to deliver him from the confines of a material world.

Superiority of Christ over Moses

(3:1 – 4:13)

Outline: (1) Jesus is superior to Moses (3:1-6), (2) Maintaining faithfulness (3:7-15), (3) Disastrous result of unbelief (3:16-18), (4) Final rest for the faithful (4:1-13)

Chapter 3

JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO MOSES

The writer has concluded his comparison between Christ and angels. He now contrasts the Sinai covenant that God made with Israel through Moses, and Aaron who functioned

as the first high priest, with the new covenant where Jesus is both the mediator through whom the covenant and law came and is now the high priest.

3:1,2 *Apostle:* The word “apostle” means one who is sent forth. Moses was God’s official representative who was sent forth to the nation of Israel. He functioned as the mediator through whom the law was given to national Israel. Christ Jesus was the one who was sent forth (“apostle”) in the last days of national Israel. Through Him, the new covenant was established (See Jn 3:17; 20:21; Rm 15:8; Ph 2:5-8). ***High Priest:*** Aaron was designated the high priest when the Sinai covenant and law were established with Israel. However, 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 was likewise 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 (1 Jn 1:9).

3:3 *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.

3:4 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 (3:3), then He is of God who is affirmed to be the builder of all things in this verse. In reference to the eternal plan of re-

demption, 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). Though we know Christ as the builder, we must understand that it was God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who were working as one to accomplish the work of implementing the predestined plan of salvation. God is one, and thus, works as one in all things (See 1:2; 1 Co 11:3; Ep 2:10). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work as one God. All three as the one God have manifested God as three in order to carry out different works in order to bring man into eternal dwelling.

3:5,6 *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). ***Christ ... as a Son:*** Moses was simply a servant on behalf of God's plan to establish the nation of Israel. 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 spiritual house of God, 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). If the Jewish Christians to whom the writer addresses these statements did not hold fast to the confession of their faith, then they would lose all that they had gained in Christ.

MAINTAINING FAITHFULNESS

3:7-11 The writer here calls for faithfulness among his

readers. He introduces this section by referring them to the apostasy of those in Israel who hardened their hearts against the will of God, and subsequently, suffered the chastisement of the Lord in the captivities of the Assyrians (722/21 B.C.) and Babylonians (586 B.C.). ***The Holy Spirit says:*** The quotation of verses 7-11 is from Psalm 95:7-11. Though David was the original inspired writer of the psalm, the Hebrew writer gives direct credit to the Holy Spirit who is the source of the statement (See 10:15; At 1:16). The same statement 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 will 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. Because we have free-moral choice, the responsibility for a hardened hearts on the shoulders of those who will not hear. ***The rebellion:*** After Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity, they rebelled against God at Mount 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 after they came out of Egyptian captivity. As a result, He did not allow those who were twenty years of age and older to enter the rest of the land of Canaan (See Dt 12:9). All those who were twenty years of age and over at the time they were at Mount Sinai, were not allowed to enter the rest of Palestine because of their rebellious attitude. Israel's rebellion, however, worked to the advantage of some in Canaan, as Rahab, who believed 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.

3:12 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. Israel was joyous to follow God in their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. However, when it came time to trust in God in the desert of the Sinai Peninsula, their faith wavered. They then sought to return to the security of Egyptian captivity. The same was happening with the Jewish Christians to whom the Hebrew writer was addressing this book. They initially rejoiced when they were delivered from the bondage of Judaism. However, when hard times came, they longed for the structures of Judaism that brought security. They sought to return to the security of institutionalized religiosity. **An evil heart of unbelief:** Israel's rebellion against God is here identified as unbelief. They rebelled because they did not trust in 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 faith, they will fall away from the truth. Those who are delivered from the bondage of man-made religions must exercise faith when following after Jesus. **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). If one seeks to return to man-made religious structures, he is departing from God. He is departing from his walk of faith with God. **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 God 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 Jesus will bring judg-

ment upon all the disobedient.

3:13 *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 body of Christ 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). This was particularly necessary in reference to the people to whom the Hebrew writer addressed these words. Trying times were coming in the lives of those to whom these words were written. The end of national Israel was at hand, and great conflict was about to be unleashed on all Jews. ***Deceitfulness of sin:*** Sin is deceiving in that it appears to bring pleasure and the satisfaction of one's own self. Sin 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 will be the condemnation of one to hell (Js 1:14,15). In this context the sin was in departing from God in order to return to the structures of Judaism. There might be some initial satisfaction in returning to an old way of traditional religiosity. However, after the return, the apostates would eventually discover that they had returned to something that was of human origin.

3:14,15 *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 and obeyed, 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).

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 continues to 4:15.

3:16 Though God had confirmed miraculously the leadership of Moses, there was rebellion in Israel. In their disobedience, they were actually rebelling against God because they rebelled against the authority that God had invested in Moses. A majority rose up against God's anointed leadership. One should never follow the crowd 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 urging the people to enter the land of promise (Nm 14:6-9,24,30).

3:17 As a result of Israel's unbelief, the nation was cursed with forty years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai (See Nm 14:20-32). All those of the age of twenty and over died during this period.

3:18 *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. 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 unbelief. The same will happen to the Jewish 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).

3:19 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 to continue to obey 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 will 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). The problem with the ones to whom the Hebrew writer was addressing this letter was that they wanted to return to a religiosity in which they legally trusted in themselves. They found security in trusting in performing the legal requirements of Judaism. Their departing, therefore, was a departure from walking with God by faith, to trusting in their own performance of man-made religiosity (See comments Gl 2:16).

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). However, if we depart from our walk by faith, we will endanger our entrance into the rest to come.

4:1 *Let us fear:* The thought here is that we must caution ourselves to live obediently because we can lose our

future rest by falling into sin because of the deceitfulness of sin (3:14). Since it is possible to lose our rest through disobedience, every Christian must be in fear lest he turn from the security of God's grace (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).

4:2 *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 remain faithful to God, 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 deliver 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 (See comments 1 Co 15:1,2). 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 be fulfilled when united with the obedient faith of those who have committed themselves to the will of God.

4:3 *Will not enter:* If one does not have faith in the word of promise, then he will reap the same consequences as those in Israel who did not believe (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.

4:4,5 *God rested:* See Gn 2:1-3; Ex 20:11. On the seventh day after the week of creation, God rested from His work of creating. He desires that we enter into rest with Him. However, those as disobedient Israel who refused to maintain an obedient faith, will not enter into rest with God (Ps 95:11).

4:6,7 The writer here quoted from Psalm 95, a psalm of David. When David wrote Psalm 95, the hope of entering the final 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 the rest is still the same. One must be obedient in response to his faith.

4:8 *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 of promise. However, it was not the final rest for the righteous. There was another rest to which the righteous of Israel were 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).

4:9,10 *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 will rest from their labors on this earth (Rv 14:13).

4:11 *Let us labor:* The Greek word “labor” (*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 to overcome the security they had as slaves in Egypt, 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 in the security of captivity, and not by faith in God to bring about His promises in the future, they could not reach forward to those things that were before (Lk 9:62).

4:12 *The word of God is living:* In this context, this passage refers to the stability or surety of God’s word of promise. 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 his 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 of promise 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. 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 God's promise of an eternal rest to come. Transformed lives that are revealed in the 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).

4:13 *No creature ... hidden from His sight:* One must not be deceived into thinking that he can receive the eternal rest of God's promise, and yet, turn back from a life that is directed by 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).

Superiority of Christ over the Levitical Priesthood

(4:14 – 10:18)

Outline: (1) Our compassionate high priest (4:14-16), (2) Qualifications for high priesthood (5:1-4), (3) Jesus qualifies for high priesthood (5:5-11), (4) Spiritual immaturity (5:12-14), (5) Guarding against apostasy (6:1-3), (6) Impossibility of returning (6:4-8), (7) Certainty of God's promises (6:9-12), (8) Sure and steadfast hope (6:13-20), (9) The order of Melchizedek (7:1-10), (10) International priesthood of Christ (7:11-25), (11) Jesus is an appropriate high priest (7:26-28), (12) The new and better covenant (8:1-13) (13) The shadow and the substance (9:1-10), (14) A cleared conscience in Christ (9:11-15), (15) Institution of a new covenant (9:16-22), (16) The sufficient sacrifice of Jesus (9:23-28), (17) Insufficiency of animal blood (10:1-10), (18) Exaltation of Christ (10:11-18)

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 who made the promised rest possible. Beginning here, the discussion centers around Jesus as our high priest who works in a greater capacity than the high priests of the Sinai law and covenant. We are not left to ourselves in order to attain the final rest. Jesus works as our high priest in order to bring about that which God promised.

4:14 *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 Sinai 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).

4:15 *In all things tempted as we are:* As our high priest, Jesus is sympathetic toward our situation because He became as we are. 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. When we realize how far Jesus had to come to rescue us, we respond with gratitude to His sacrifice (Compare 2 Co 4:15).

4:16 *Come boldly to the throne of grace:* We can come

boldly to the throne only because there is grace. Since through grace Jesus manifested His sympathy toward our situation, we can have confidence to approach the 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 Jesus (Ti 2:11). In contrast to the Sinai law wherein one would need to live perfectly according to law in order to feel justified to approach God, under the new covenant of grace, one can come boldly before God on the basis of the cross, not the merit of 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 a high priest is exalted in order to convince the readers that in view of the ministry of Jesus as our high priest, it would be foolish to return to the Aaronic priesthood of the Sinai law and covenant.

5:1 *Taken from among men:* Under the Sinai law, the high priest who was born of the tribe of Levi, and was a descendant of Aaron. The fact that he was a man gave him the opportunity to understand those for whom he ministered as a high priest. In the same way, Jesus was incarnate in the flesh in order that He might identify with our infirmities (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 Sinai covenant offered gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people (ch 9; Lv 16).

5:2 *He can have compassion:* The writer does not want

us to stray from the point that the Son of God was incarnated in order to become a high priest for man. He did not lose His sensitivity for us when He was exalted to the right hand of God. The high priest who is appointed from among men can identify with the needs of weak and frail worshippers. In the same way, Jesus continues to understand our situation because He humbled Himself to our weaknesses.

5:3,4 *Obligated ... to offer:* Because of the weakness of humanity, including the high priest, the high priest was required under the Sinai law to offer the annual sacrifice for the nation of Israel. The sacrifice was not only for the nation, but also for the high priest (Lv 4:3; 9:7; 16:1-24; see Hb 7:27; 9:7). ***Called of God:*** Under the Sinai 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 initially appointed Aaron and his heritage of sons as high priests of Israel (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

5:5,6 *So also Christ:* Jesus did not of Himself assume the office and work as our high priest (Compare Jn 5:31,43; 8:54). He was appointed directly to be a 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, He 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 our high priest. The actual appointment was a onetime event. However, the effect of His appointment as our high priest had unending consequences. In this sense, His high priest ministry continues without end. ***Order of***

Melchizedek: In this context, the writer introduces the concept that Jesus is a high priest with unending service for those who have come to the throne of grace (4:16; see ch 7).

5:7 *In the days of His flesh:* The Hebrew writer is contrasting the time of Jesus' earthly dwelling with His present heavenly existence. Emphasis here is on His ministry while on earth. At the end of His ministry on earth, and in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus offered up prayers to the Father with intense agony. He offered up the prayers because He knew that the Father was able to work in His deliverance. He was heard by the Father because He submitted to the will of the Father. ***Prayers and supplications:*** Jesus went through intense agony in prayer 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).

5:8,9 *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). ***Having been made perfect:*** Jesus' obedience to the eternal plan 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 (*aionios*) 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 Jesus must keep 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.

5:10,11 *Designated by God:* Jesus has been called by God to be our High Priest. Under the Sinai law no one could be the 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). ***Hard to explain ... dull of hearing:*** It was hard to explain because of the dullness of those to whom it 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 their 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 (Compare 2 Th 2:10-12). They had evi-

dently turned their ears from the message to which they had been listening for several years. They had grown cold to the good news of the gospel, 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

5:12 *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 be of the spiritual and intellectual nature that is characteristic of teachers. It is evident that they had refused to accept their responsibility to grow. They had stalemated at a certain level of spiritual and intellectual growth. 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 intro. to Gl). Judaism was plagued with the legal 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 one 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 the performance of his religious ceremonialism (See comments Cl 2:20-22). It seems that the readers here had brought into the church this system of ceremonial religiosity that hindered their spiritual growth. Their faith had become empty, and thus, they were on the verge of returning 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 Bible study. 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 in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (See comments Rm 10:17; 2 Pt 3:18). Their departure from their legal Christianity to legal Judaism was a simple change in ceremonies. **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, and a haven for those who thirst for spiritual growth. **Teach you again the first principles:** These Christians illustrate the nature of too many disciples today who have ceased to grow spiritually, 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 growth 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 the disciples 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 and responsibility to study.

5:13 *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 body. When the church of Christ produces professionals who are to be those “skilled in the word” among us, then the members of the body have

become intellectually lazy in their study of the word for themselves. Members of the body cannot hire their Bible study to be done for them. When the members of the body allowed themselves to become unskilled in the word, they are in the beginnings of apostasy because they have allowed themselves to be led astray by those to whom they have given authority to professional students the word of God (See comments At 20:29,30; 2 Tm 4:3). 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 was 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).

5:14 *Solid food:* A greater knowledge of the word of God gives one the ability to discern between what is tradition and what is opinion (See Is 7:15; Ph 1:9). When one spiritually grows, 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 (Rm 10:17).

Chapter 6

GUARDING AGAINST APOSTASY

6:1,2 *Elementary principles of the Christ:* This statement indicates that reference is to the first principles of the word of Christ. Some interpreters believe that reference is to Jewish proselyting practices in the 1st 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. But in view of the writer's admonition that recipients of the letter should by now be teachers (5:12), the context indicates that the writer 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 unlikely assertion that the writer would refer to Jewish practices and beliefs as the first principles of Christ. In 5:12 the writer had rebuked his readers for not growing intellectually 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 in order to become spiritually mature on solid food. ***Let us go on to perfection:*** The exhortation to all disciples is that they spiritually grow through their study of the word of God (2 Pt 3:18), in order to be able to present themselves worthy before God (2 Tm 2:15). This exhortation falls 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 word of Christ because they failed to continue to grow. In order to guard against apos-

tasy, therefore, one must grow. And in order to grow, one must continually listen to God who speaks through His word. ***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 writes these thoughts were first converted out of Judaism which was a legalistic system of religion (See intro. to Gl). When converted to Christ, many Jewish converts brought into the church this system of legal religiosity, and thus, they 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). ***Teachings about baptisms:*** The word "baptisms" is plural, and thus, reference is here to more than one baptism. The Jews practiced a ceremonial baptism, or immersion. In this context, reference could also be to John's baptism (Mk 1:3,4; At 19:1-6), or 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 (See Ep 4:4-6). ***Laying on of hands:*** The laying on of the apostles' hands was a major

ministry in the 1st century church. It was by the laying on of the apostles' hands that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted 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 in order to focus on the development of their God-given natural gifts. The miraculous gifts of the Spirit 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. The miraculous gifts were to pass away (See comments 1 Co 13:8-12). The readers are here encouraged to focus on the word of God as it has already been revealed, and 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 grown little 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 judg-

ment will take place at one time, but the result of the judgment will last without end.

6:3 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. If they follow the instructions of this letter, therefore, they will have grown beyond the first principles of the faith. In order to grow, however, they had to move past their dull hearing in order to be exhorted by what the Holy Spirit was saying in this letter.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF RETURNING

6:4 *Impossible:* In these few statements the writer reveals the devastating impact that apostasy has on the individual who forsakes from the grace of God. It is impossible to renew this person 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 perfectly under the Jews' system of legal religiosity. They experienced the freedom that is in Christ (See comments Gl 5:1-6). The apostate 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 law. His efforts are futile, however, for by works of law no man can be justified before God (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). One cannot stand just before God by law-keeping law simply because no person can keep law perfectly. ***Once enlightened:*** We must not miss the point that the writer here states. These apostates fully understood that from which

they would turn (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, therefore, 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 in the word of God. 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 Sinai 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 in order 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). The disciples of Jesus, therefore, must submit to being led by the word of Jesus. If the Spirit is responsible for one's individual spiritual growth, then cer-

tainly 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. Every individual disciple must take ownership of his faithfulness.

6:5 *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. They were at the time they received this letter experiencing the powers that God revealed at the beginning of the Messianic age (Compare Jl 2:28). 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. They experienced the reality of the miraculous working of God in their lives. 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 yet to come. They turned away from the direct revelation of God. As 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 manifes-

tation of God. They were thus without excuse.

6:6 *If they fall away:* The subjunctive mood here 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 away from Jesus. Some had evidently turned away. There were some on the verge of falling. He wrote in order to exhort those who were 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). By their lack of commitment to Jesus, they bring shame upon the name of Jesus and His body.

6:7,8 *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. ***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

6:9 *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 (10:39). 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 that 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 keeping a legal check list of requirements for salvation, he will struggle to keep the list. He may be satisfied with his outward performance, 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 outward performances of his religion without concentrating on the inward spiritual growth of his heart. But the one who is motivated by an inward appreciation for his salvation by God's grace will continue to respond beyond measure because of his gratitude for his salvation (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). The grateful believer does not consider burdensome the keeping of God's commandments. Obedience is not burdensome because he does not obey in order to merit his salvation (1 Jn 5:3). Keeping God's commandments by the grateful believer is a joyful experience in following the instructions of 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 from a satisfaction of accomplishing a legal performance of codes and regulations. His response thus grows as his knowledge of God's grace grows (See comments 2 Pt 3:18).

6:10 *Ministered ... still are ministering:* Through ministry, these readers had proved their faithfulness to the saints 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 (See Rm 3:4; 2 Th 1:6,7).

6:11 *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 merits in order to win a prize. The good works the 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.

6:12 *Through faith and patience:* 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

6:13-15 *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). ***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 fulfill-

ment of the promise being carried out by the birth of his son Isaac (See comments Rm 4:20,21).

6:16-20 In matters of disagreement among the Jews, an oath was given by both parties. When both parties agreed in a dispute, the giving of the oath ended the disagreement (Compare Gn 14:22; 21:23ff; Ex 22:11). **Confirmed it by an oath:** The word “confirmed” could be translated “guaranteed.” In order to show His unchangeable promise that He gave to Abraham in the past, God guaranteed the promise with His oath. **Two unchangeable things:** The two unchangeable things upon which Christians are given hope are the promise of God that He swears by Himself as God, 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). 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 a 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

This particular chapter begins the writer's arguments that strike at the very heart of why some Jewish Christians were moving back to the institutional ceremonial structures of Judaism. It is the desire of man to construct religions that are identified by ceremonies of worship or assembly. We often seek to walk by sight in order to satisfy the lusts of the flesh and eyes. As the legally oriented Jews, we seek to validate our worship and discipleship, therefore, through acts of ceremonially performed worship. They were succumbing to the appeal of the outward performance of institutional religiosity. The ceremonies of the priests of Judaism reassured the adherents that worship was being performed, and thus they felt a sense of security by the performance of worship. The ceremonial performance of the priests at the altar manifested this appeal more than any other aspect of Judaism. In contrast to the appeal to the lusts of the flesh and eyes of institutional religiosity, Jesus' priestly duty occurred once and for all time, and thus one must understand and perceive by faith His present ministry of priesthood. His function as our high priest is understood only through our study of the New Testament. The Christian walks by faith, not by the appeal of religious ceremonies that seek to satisfy outward performance. By emphasizing this point, the writer will reach a climax of the walk of faith by giving numerous examples of how the righteous, before the cross, walked by faith.

7:1-3 *Melchizedek*: The writer here uses the unrecorded beginning and ending of the priesthood of Melchizedek in the life of Abraham as an illustration of the unending priest-

hood of Jesus (See 5:6; 6:20; Gn 14:18-20). As Jesus, Melchizedek was a priest and king. However, there is no record of his direct appointment by God to be a priest and king. We accept his priesthood and kingship simply because we read about it in the inspired Scriptures. The recipients of the Hebrew letter, therefore, were walking by faith in accepting the priesthood and kingship of Melchizedek. The Hebrew writer's argument is that they must do the same in reference to the kingship and priesthood of Jesus. They must walk by faith in accepting the inspired record that taught His kingship and priesthood.

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.

7:4 In the preceding statements, the writer established the 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, he exalts the priesthood of Jesus above the Levitical priests. ***Abraham gave a tenth:*** Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation. As the father of the nation of Israel, however, he exalted the priesthood of Melchizedek by voluntarily paying tithes to Melchizedek. Through the paying of these tithes, Abraham showed honor to Melchizedek, and thus, he 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 Sinai 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 Sinai law, the fact remains that Abraham voluntarily paid the tithe to Melchizedek because Melchizedek was a priest of God.

7:5-10 *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. 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. He is the last high priest. Because His priesthood continues, it is greater than the Levitical priesthood.

INTERNATIONAL PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

7:11 *If perfection were through the Levitical priesthood:* This verse is a question that demands the answer that there was no perfection through the Levitical priesthood. Under the Levitical 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 in order to justify themselves before God (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16,21; 3:11). Second, there was no justification for sin under the law because it was impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins (10:1-4). The answer to the ques-

tion 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.

7:12,13 *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 Sinai 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 Sinai 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 Sinai 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 Sinai law that was given to Israel. They now live under the New Testament law of Christ (See comments Rm 7:1-4).

7:14 *Spoke nothing concerning priesthood:* Herein is an argument from the silence of the Scriptures. The Sinai 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 only from the tribe of Levi. This commandment, therefore, restricted priests from any other tribe. The command was silent in reference to condemning priests from coming from other tribes. 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 Sinai law was still in force.

7:15-17 Jesus cannot be a priest after the order of the Levitical priests. He must be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The priesthood of the Sinai law was mortal and found its authority for existence in the Sinai law. But the priesthood of Jesus is after that of Melchizedek, and thus, was established by the direct command of God. 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.

7:18,19 *Annuling of the former commandment:* Jesus came to fulfill the Sinai law that was given exclusively to Israel (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 Sinai law has accomplished its purpose, and thus, it 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, it 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 in order to justify oneself before God. In other words, one cannot keep law perfectly in order to place God in debt to reward one with eternal life. All people 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 Sinai 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 reserved 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).

7:20,21 *Not without an oath:* God swore by an oath upon the basis of His existence as God that Jesus would be our high priest (See 6:13-18; Ps 110:4). Under the Sinai law one was born into the family of priests simply by being of the tribe of Levi. He was a priest by birth, not by oath. However, Jesus has been made our 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.

7:22 *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). He is a priest for all people. 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 Sinai covenant that God made with Israel to bring Israel to a new covenant through Christ. The new covenant is the final covenant that God will make with man on earth.

7:23-25 In contrast to the international and eternal priesthood of Jesus, the Levitical priests could not serve without end. Physical death brought an end to their service as priests. However, Jesus' priesthood continues on because He lives. ***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). ***Save those to the uttermost:*** Because of His eternal priesthood, Jesus can do what the Levitical priesthood could not do. He can function on behalf of Christians as their priestly intercessor throughout eternity (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

7:26 ***Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate ... exalted:*** These words explain the nature of the priesthood of Jesus. In contrast to the Levitical priests, Jesus lived on earth in a sinless manner in reference to the Sinai law (4:15). He does not work against us, but is the gentle Savior who calls all people to 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 (Mt 28:18).

7:27,28 ***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). However, 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

that is 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. It 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. **Weakness:** The commandment of the Sinai law designated priests who were not able to live sinless lives (5:1,2; Rm 3:9,10,23). Through His oath, however, God appointed Jesus, who is sinless (4:15), to be our high 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 cleanse us of sin (1 Tm 2:5; 1 Jn 1:7). He is our intercessor (Rm 8:34) and advocate (1 Jn 2:1). For this reason, no man should ever want to return to the priesthood of the old covenant. The problem facing the Jewish Christians to whom the Hebrew writer was addressing these exhortations, was the fact that the ceremonial performances of the Levitical priests appealed to their legal religiosity. They could visibly see the priest performing his duties at the altar as a high priest. Under the priesthood of Jesus, however, we cannot see Jesus performing His duties as our high priest. He performed His duty once on the cross. We read about what He did in the New Testament. Understanding the priesthood of Jesus from a study of His historical atoning sacrifice was not appealing to some of the recipients of this letter. What was more appealing was actually watching the ceremonial performance of the Levitical priest carrying out his duties at the altar. The function of ceremonial religiosity appeals to the sight. The priesthood of Jesus is perceived through faith. One priesthood is a walk by sight, the other by faith. Those who seek to walk by sight orchestrate great religious ceremonial performances in order to appeal to the sight, and thus be assured that worship is being accomplished. Countless reli-

gious structures have been constructed throughout the world today that are built on the foundation that religious people seek to worship in a manner by which they can feel secure in their performance of worship ceremonies. True worshipers of God, however, seek to worship Him according to the guidance of His word.

Chapter 8

THE NEW AND BETTER COVENANT

8:1,2 *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, He 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 from heaven in the Holy of Holies of the spiritual sanctuary of the tabernacle of God (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 pitched by man. 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 spiritual tabernacle that is pitched in the hearts of the saints was pitched by God. The substance from which the shadow was derived 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).

8:3,4 *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). This offering that brought gifts to men no longer has to be offered. ***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, then 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 function as a priest and king on this earth. If He comes to this earth, then He will have to give up His priesthood. We can thus be thankful 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. We must not forget the underlying problem that the writer is attacking. Christians walk by faith. If we would seek to have Jesus return to this earth in order to set up a priesthood that appeals to the lust of the eyes, then we would be asking Him to establish something that is less than what He now does on our behalf.

8:5 *A copy and shadow:* The Sinai tabernacle and priesthood were of this world. They were temporary. They appealed to the sight of the adherents. However, they did function as earthly and physical 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, was to be constructed and reconstructed 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 the initial 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 establishing the assembly of His people. The church, therefore, was not built after the invention of men in the 1st 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 to accept Jesus and His church.

8:6 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, He administers reconciliation in bringing man to God (9:15; 12:24). In this way, 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 Sinai law and covenant. For this reason, the writer argues that it would be senseless to return to that which was inferior to what the Christian now has in Christ.

8:7-9 Finding fault with them: The establishment 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 in order to save himself (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11). The weakness of the Sinai law and covenant, therefore, was in people who could not live perfectly under law. The Sinai law and covenant were adequate for the purposes for which they were intended (Rm 7:12). The law gave Israel direction concerning what God would have the people 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). Law cannot justify simply because it is impossible for any person to keep the law perfectly. Therefore, the Sinai law was never meant to be God's final law to man. Neither was it given as a system for salvation. 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). The new covenant was better because it was based on grace. **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 that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. 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. For this reason, God promised that He would establish with them a new covenant that was based on faith (See Jr 31:31-34). **House of Israel and ... Judah:**

In the context of Jeremiah's prophecy, 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. The new covenant was thus international, not simply national.

8:10-12 *I will put My laws into 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 Sinai covenant was national in the sense that it did not demand prior commitment before one came into a 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 a covenant relationship with God as a Jew. From childhood the Israelites were taught the conditions (the law) of the covenant while in a covenant relationship with God (See Is 54:12-15; Jn 6:44,45). However, in contrast to the nature of the Sinai covenant relationship that God had with the nation of Israel, the new covenant was to be different. Under the new covenant, when one is born into a new covenant relationship with God, he had already been taught to know God. He had been taught the conditions for establishing a covenant relationship, and thus, through immersion for the remission of sins, one voluntarily joined in a covenant relationship with God through the new birth (Jn 3:3-5; Rm 6:3-6). Therefore, under the new covenant one is first taught the terms of agreement for keeping the covenant before he comes into a covenant relationship with God. In this sense, the law of God is already in one's 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 God's 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 are assured 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).

8:13 When the promise of Jeremiah 31:31-34 was made, the old covenant was in the process of vanishing away, for God had already made a plan to establish a new covenant with Israel. It vanished when Jesus came to fulfill the Sinai law of the covenant (Mt 5:17,18). When Jesus died on the cross, the Sinai 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 Sinai 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 be terminated. That imminent end was in the near future in that the fulfillment of Jesus' proph-

ecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and temple 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 Sinai priesthood and 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 from A.D. 30 to A.D. 70 as an opportunity to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

Chapter 9

THE SHADOW AND THE SUBSTANCE

The writer now proceeds to explain the inadequacies of the Sinai covenant and its laws in reference to salvation. At the time of his writing, this covenant with its law had passed away. Jewish Christians were dead to the law of the Sinai covenant 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.

9:1-5 *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). 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. ***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 tablets 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 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 two 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 introduced 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 that they copied in the building of the temple, God placed no emphasis on such as a location of worship (See comments At 17:24-28). The temple of David was not in the original plan of God for Israel. No instructions were ever given for its construction. Instructions were given in the law concerning the construction and reconstruction of the tabernacle throughout the history of Israel. The tabernacle was to be moved about from one tribal territory to another throughout the years. However, when Israel began to move away from God, God allowed David the concession for Solomon, his son, to build the temple. It is for this reason that in the Hebrew writer's description of God's presence among His people, he did not refer the people to the temple, but to the tabernacle.

9:6,7 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).

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.

9:8,9 Through the tabernacle, God was illustrating a truth. While the tabernacle was in force as God's instituted

presence on earth among the Israelites, the way into heaven (the holiest of all) was not clearly understood. The way to heaven was not clearly revealed through the Sinai law.

Symbol for the present time: The Hebrew writer used the structure and function of the tabernacle service to illustrate that which existed in reference to Christ and His ministry to save the people of God. When Christ came, it was revealed what the law and tabernacle illustrated. The way to heaven was made known only in Jesus Christ (10:19,20). The veil into heaven remained while the Sinai system of law remained in force.

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 to atone for his sins. No amount of animal blood could ever be poured out to atone for any sin between man and God. Therefore, under the Sinai law, 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 in order to live without sin before God.

Cannot make ... perfect: One could not be perfected under the law for two reasons. First, he could not keep the law perfectly in order to justify himself before God (7:19; see comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16,21; 3:11). Second, because of sin, 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. Law can thus never bring salvation simply because no man can keep it perfectly. When man sins, there are no atoning sacrifices or good works one can do in order to make atonement for his sins.

In regard to the conscience: The worshipers under the Sinai 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).

9:10 Though the worshipers knew the futility of keeping the ordinances perfectly, they knew, however, that they needed to keep the ordinances in obedience to God. God had instituted the ordinances in order to offer man God-ordained direction by which the worshipers could manifest their faith. The law was not given as a means of salvation, but a means by which those who walked by faith could manifest their obedience to the will of the Father. ***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; 1 Co 15:10). 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, our focus is to be on the heart, not on the outward manifestation of God through physical structures as the tabernacle or the priests' service at the tabernacle (1 Pt 3:4). One reason why God instituted the ceremonial performances of the law was to drive man to accept the grace and faith that came through Jesus. The old law was outward and oriented toward ceremonial performances. The new law is inward by 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 not to view the New Testament law of Christ after the manner by which the Jews sought to keep the Sinai law. God does not give law in order to frustrate man in his obedience. Law was never given as a means of salvation, but a means by which men could manifest their faith by following God's direction in

this world (Rm 3:31). The Sinai law was given in order that men realize that they could never keep law perfectly in order to meritoriously earn a right to eternal life (See comments Rm & Gl). Once one confesses that he cannot keep law perfectly, then he is driven to the mercy and grace of God.

A CLEARED CONSCIENCE IN CHRIST

9:11 *But Christ appeared:* If one recognized the futility of the Sinai system of law, then 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 their obedience to the Sinai 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 Sinai law. He brought forth a community of those who have come into a 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 global body of Christ (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).

9:12 *Once for all:* As opposed to the blood of animals, Jesus offered His own incarnate blood for the sins of those who draw near to Him (Is 53:12; Ep 1:7). Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven with His own blood, not with the

blood of animals. In contrast to the yearly offering of animal sacrifices under the Old Testament law, His sacrifice for the sins of men was made once and for all time. ***Eternal redemption:*** The effects of the action of redemption by the offering of His blood at the cross was “eternal” (*aionios*). The Greek word *aionios* that is used here does not mean that the offering continued on without end. Such continual offerings was what the Hebrew writer was arguing against. Jesus died on the cross only one time. There was only one offering, as opposed to the yearly offering that took place under the Sinai law. 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 onetime offering of Jesus on the cross. The definition of *aionios* is in the writer’s argument for the sufficiency of the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross. His atoning sacrifice 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 that is to come (See vss 25,28).

9:13,14 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 effective in reference to sin, whereas the blood of animals was not (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 perform, 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 reference to the atonement of our sins. They cannot atone for our sins because our eternal redemption is not based on our performance of law, but on the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus (See comments Ep 2:1-10).

9:15 *Mediator of the new covenant:* Because there was no redemption under the old, Jesus was revealed for the sake of mankind. Through His sacrifice, Jesus became the only mediator between God and man under the new covenant (8:6; 1 Tm 2:5). ***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 atoning sacrifice of the cross (See comments Rm 3:25). In reference to our confinement to time, by their faith, those who sinned before the cross had forgiveness of sins in view of the cross. God sees and knows all things. For this reason, He could immediately forgive the sins of those who lived before the cross on the basis of faith and repentance. Their sins were forgiven because of the cross that was yet in their future. God 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 all sins of the faithful before the cross 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. We are privileged, therefore, to live in this era of time. We have a knowledge of the plan of redemption that the people of God did not have before the cross.

INSTITUTION OF A NEW COVENANT

9:16,17 *A covenant is ratified upon death:* A testament is a will. While the testator is alive, he makes his will or testament in reference to the inheritance. He gives directions concerning the distribution of possessions after his death. The death of the one who makes the will is necessary in order to activate the desires of the testator. In order to activate His testament (will), Jesus had to die (Gl 3:15). When He died on the cross, the desires of His testament were brought into force. The desires of His testament were made available to all the heirs. 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 and the good news of the gospel. It was then that people submitted to His lordship by obedience to the gospel, and subsequently, came into a 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 obedience to the gospel 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 blessing of salvation that was provided in the new testament of Jesus through His own blood.

9:18-22 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 God had commanded them was to keep the condi-

tions of the covenant, and thus, remain in a 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

9:23 The physical things of the tabernacle on earth had to be cleansed and inaugurated by the blood of animals, which blood originated from this world. However, these things were only an illustration 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. Heavenly things had to be purified with a heavenly sacrifice.

9:24 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, having interceded and mediated on behalf of those who have agreed to the conditions of the new covenant (7:25; Rm 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1). He mediated and interceded on our behalf at the cross. Since the cross, the effect of His mediation and intercession have continued.

9:25 ***Nor ... 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 one-time 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 Sinai high priest who had to enter yearly the holy of holies with sacrificial blood for the sins of the people (vs 7).

9:26 *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). ***End of the ages:*** God planned the end of national Israel. In referring to the end of the ages, the writer wanted his Jewish recipients of this letter to understand that the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel concerning the consummation of national Israel had come to pass in their lifetime. All that Jesus did at the cross and the enactment of the new covenant had taken place. He thus argues that they should not go back to that which God ended in Christ.

9:27 *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 time, 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. At death, the faithful Christian has gone to

be with Jesus. He will be with Jesus until he comes with Him for the living saints at the end of time (1 Th 4:13-18). It will be then that the dead saints will be embodied and the living saints will be changed. All saints will then go into eternal dwelling (2 Co 5:1-8).

9:28 *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 final coming of Jesus. Those who do not, are not prepared. Their hesitation in reference to the coming of Jesus manifests 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

10:1 *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 perfect those who draw near:*** 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 for 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, that are less than man, could not be offered on behalf of man who has a soul and spirit that has the opportunity of eternal existence in the presence of God.

10:2 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.

10:3,4 *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). ***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).

10:5-7 *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).

10:8-10 *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). ***He takes away the first:*** Before He came into the world, Jesus knew the insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood and the animal sacrifices that 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 of sin and death in order to establish His covenant and law of grace, wherein men could received the benefits of His sacrifice that was offered once and for all time (9:12,24). ***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

10:11 *Daily ministering:* At the time this epistle was written, the priests of Jerusalem were still continuing the animal sacrifices at the altar. Some students have affirmed that God allowed the law and sacrifices to continue for forty years until 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. However, to those Jews who were converted, but missed the ceremonial performance of the Sinai law, they were tempted to return, as the recipients of this letter, to the legal function of the Levitical system. The Hebrew writer, therefore, reminded them of the insufficiency of the law and its sacrifices, and thus the futility of the sacrifices that were required by the law. ***Can never take away sins:*** Since the event of the cross, there were those in Israel who continued 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).

10:12 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). He now functions as our high priest without the necessity of continually offering sacrifices at the altar.

10:13,14 All the enemies of righteousness are now un-

der the kingdom reign of Jesus (Ps 110:1). Though we do not now see everything in control by King 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). **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).

10:15-18 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 a 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 was no forgiveness through the offering of animal sacrifices, then the offering of such sacrifices would be a futile effort on behalf of those who would return to the Levitical system. In view of the sufficiency of the offering of Jesus, one would wonder why these early Jewish 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). If they did not spiritually progress in their understanding of the cross, then the legal performances of Judaism from which they came

was appealing. It was appealing to return to a system by which their ceremonial performances gave them a sense of being meritoriously right before God, and thus forgiven. 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 out for the salvation of man (2 Pt 3:18). It is easy to turn back from that which one does not fully understand through faith in order to follow after that which one does in walking by sight. For this reason, men construct religions that are based on ceremonial performances in order to act out their worship.

Superiority of Faith

(10:19 – 13:25)

Outline: (1) Drawing near with assurance (10:19-25), (2) Warning against apostasy (10:26-31), (3) Remember the former days (10:32-39), (4) The nature of saving faith (11:1-40), (5) Christian perseverance (12:1-11), (6) Encouragement to be holy (12:12-17), (7) Mount Sinai and Zion (12:18-24), (8) Take heed to listen (12:25-29), (9) Well-pleasing service to God (13:1-16), (10) Concluding exhortations (13:17-25)

DRAWING NEAR WITH ASSURANCE

10:19 The doctrinal arguments of the letter have now been completed. The writer moves on with a message of encouragement to draw near to what God has provided through Jesus. **Boldness:** It is through faith in the blood of Jesus that we can confidently approach God (4:14-16; Ep 2:18). Our boldness is based on faith, not on the ceremonial performances of worship. We can have confidence that we will enter into heaven through the blood of Jesus because we have faith in the cross (9:8,12). Therefore, one's confidence to enter into heaven is not based on the accumulation of good works or the performance of animal sacrifices that one would meritoriously offer in order to earn the right to enter heaven. Our confidence is based on our faith in the grace of God that was revealed through the sac-

rificial offering of the blood of Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11).

10:20,21 *New and living way:* Jesus is the new and living way through whom we 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). God's people now approach Him individually through the cross, not nationally through the ceremonial function of the Levitical priesthood. ***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 Sinai law, Christians are now the spiritual house of God (See Is 2:2,3; 1 Tm 3:15). They are the evidence of the presence of God because God dwells in them.

10:22 *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 ceremonies 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 Sinai law where blood was sprinkled on the people in order to set them apart and inaugurate a covenant relationship between the nation and 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).

10:23 *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 baptism (3:6,14; 4:14; Ep 6:10). Christians must have confidence (faith) 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.

10:24 *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 their community (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 the assemblies Christians would have would be participatory (Compare comments 1 Co 14). 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 ministries.

10:25 *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 ministry. Individual members must show up for the meetings where ministry is 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 ministry (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 does not state that all the disciples in a particular area must assemble at the same place at the same time. He simply states that the purpose for the assemblies is to stir up love, and thus, implement good works. The disciples in any area can assemble in many small groups in order to carry out what is mandated in this context. ***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 national Israel 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 terminated (See comments Mt 24). This would be the consummation of the ages that was prophesied by the prophets (See comments Ez & Dn). 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 historical context, the first interpretation would be more probable. 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 national Israel 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 Sinai law and covenant (See comments 12:25-29).

WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY

10:26 *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 from the grace of God in order to live under the legal system of the Sinai law (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. This is the one about whom Paul wrote in the Galatian letter, who denied the grace of God (See comments Gl 5:1-5). Those who would enact the Sinai ordinances should be cautioned about going back to the statutes of the Sinai law in order to be justified before God. ***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). This is the truth of the gospel. It is from this truth 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). He is severed from Christ (Gl 5:1-6). And since he is severed from Christ, then the cleansing blood of Christ is no longer effective in his life.

10:27 *Judgment ... fiery indignation:* The apostate has nothing to look forward to 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 His people.

10:28,29 Under the Sinai 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). **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 for those who have had the benefit of the great things of the new covenant (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 length of time for more stripes to be inflicted on the apostate as explained by Jesus in Luke 12:41-48 (See comments). The intensity of the punishment of hell is the same. The duration of 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 done who has returned to the ceremonial observance of 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 Sinai law 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. They

should make one very cautious about enacting any ordinance of the Sinai law. 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, or any religion of man. In this case it would apply to those who forsake the grace of God in order to return to Judaism. 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).

10:30 *Vengeance is Mine:* If one would bring shame on the name of Christ by returning to the legal system of ceremonial performances of the law, then God will eventually take vengeance on that person. 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). In the immediate historical context of this statement, reference would be to God’s coming in judgment on national Israel in A.D. 70. Israel was taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity in their past because they blasphemed the name of God among the nations by turning to idolatrous religions. The same judgment was coming again on national Israel because unbelieving Jews rejected the Son of God. Those who would forsake their covenant relationship with Jesus in order to return to the law, would join with those whom God would destroy in A.D. 70.

10:31 *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 considered the blood of Jesus to be of little value (See Mt 10:28; Lk 12:5).

REMEMBER THE FORMER DAYS

10:32,33 *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). They must remember why they were drawn to deliverance from their bondage in sin. *Enlightened:* They were enlightened by the light of the gospel. The gospel delivered them from their problem of sin and death (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). The indication here is that they had been Christians for some time. We do not know how long. However, when they first became Christians they suffered many things from their fellow Jews who persecuted them (See 12:4; 1 Co 4:9). They willingly suffered with those who suffered for Christ in preaching 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, 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.

10:34 *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. How-

ever, time had passed since the early days of fighting for the faith. In their complacency, therefore, they were being intimidated by nationalistic Jews to return to their Jewish heritage. 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 (See comments Gl 2:11-21). 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 in order to become just another religious group of the community. Christians must be diligent to remember that they are the children of God, and thus, they are called by God to follow His word and not the man-made religious inventions of those among whom they live. ***A better and an enduring possession:*** The true possession of the Christian is reserved 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 above. He must look forward to the heavenly realm of existence which is not of this world (See Ph 3:13,14; 2 Pt 3:13).

10:35,36 Since they have heaven before them, they must not forsake the confidence of their salvation that 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). ***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; 1 Co 3:9-15). 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 Christians is complacency 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).

10:37 *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 final return of Jesus in the lifetime of the first readers of the New Testament letters. If it did not teach such in the 1st 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 of national Israel. This judgment would be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus that is recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 (See comments Mt 24; Lk 21). 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 Sinai 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, 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 Habbakkuk 2:3,4, the destruction would occur.

10:38 *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 the fact 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 by His grace (See comments Gl 3:11).

10:39 *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 had already fallen back into a state wherein destruction awaited them (See 2 Th 1:7-9). They would not turn away from the blood of the cross, and subsequently be caught in the judgment of God upon national Israel (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 of the will of God because of one’s confidence that God will bring about a reward for those who remain faithful.

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 promised 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 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 of obedience to the will of God without any knowledge of Jesus and the cross.

11:1 *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. In the 1st century, therefore, He confirmed His messengers and message by miraculous manifestations (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). They grow in faith in the promises of God as they study the testimony of those who personally experienced the confirming miracles that are recorded in the Bible.

11:2 *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, without any knowledge of the Son

of God, then we must conclude that they experienced the work of God in their lives.

11:3 *Formed by the word of God:* Nothing has existed from all eternity outside the existence of God. Therefore, through the commanding word of God, all that now exists was brought into existence by God (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 that 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 Romans 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.

11:4 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 an 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 through 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 teaches 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). The disciples of Jesus, therefore, should be looking to the word of God for encouragement and the building of their faith (Rm 10:17). Those who have become dull of hearing, will look to their own feelings and life experiences in order to grow in faith. They will have itching ears, seeking for the testimony of others who supposedly encountered some miraculous work of God. Their faith is thus founded on their own emotions and conclusions, not in the evidence of the Holy Spirit's inspired testimony that is recorded in the word of God. Those who are dull of hearing have ceased their study of the word of God in order to build their faith on themselves (See comments Rm 10:17).

11:5 *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.

11:6 *Without faith:* This is the foundation upon which the disciples of Jesus function today. Their faith is not in the meritorious performance of religious ceremonies. It is in the performance of Jesus on the cross who offered an atoning sacrifice for our sins once and for all time. If one's faith does not move him into depending on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, it is a faith that does not please God. The

writer is here affirming that faith must act in faithful 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).

11:7 *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 on God in their thinking (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).

11:8 *Abraham ... obeyed*: When God called Abraham to leave his father's house, he left his home 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). When he heard 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.

11:9 *A foreign 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.

11:10 *A 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.

11:11 *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 that God is 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 an enduring faith one manifests that he is looking for the fulfillment of the promises of God (2 Pt 3:11-13).

11:12 *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" in reference to procreation, 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 (Compare comments Gl 4:21-31).

11:13 *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 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. Since the readers of this letter considered those about whom the writer here speaks to be heroes of faith, he challenges them to manifest the same faith as their heroes. Though these heroes of faith did not experience the final end of the promises, they continued to remain faithful to God. ***Seen them afar off:*** They realized that God had something greater in the future than their immediate experience with God working in their lives in the present (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. The Bible is a record of the many promises that God has fulfilled. 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 plan of redemption to bring them into an eternal dwelling with Him. ***For- eigners 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 of 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).

11:14,15 *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 coun- try:*** 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 their desire to return to Abraham's homeland on this earth.

11:16 *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:*** Travelers 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 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).

11:17-19 *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 sought to offer Isaac in obedience to God. Abraham sought 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.

11:20,21 *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. ***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 continued to worship and trust in God's promises throughout his life of dwelling in tents. We must remember also 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.

11:22,23 *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 Palestine (Gn 50:24,25; Ex 13:19; Ja 24:32). ***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).

11:24-26 *Moses ... refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter:* When Moses grew up he made a free-moral choice to identify with the people of God. By refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he identified himself as a Jew, and thus, he 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, concludes 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).

11:27 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 the leaders that God can use in His work to evangelize the world. **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).

11:28,29 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. **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).

11:30-32 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. **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). **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.

11:33-38 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.

11:39,40 *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

12:1 *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 in preparation for races would carry weights in order to strengthen their muscles for the race. The weights, however, would weigh them down and make them unable to 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 race of faith (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 religiosity after his own laziness. It is this type of religion that will lead one to destruction.

12:2 *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. 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 origi-

nated 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; Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22).

12:3 *Consider Him who endured:* When Christians think that they are suffering too much for Jesus, then they should think of all the things that Jesus endured on their behalf (Mt 10:16; Ph 2:5-11; 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).

12:4 *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 one's conviction. One's physical life is surely of little value in com-

parison to the eternal life that one will receive in the presence of God (Rm 8:18; Ti 1:2).

12:5,6 *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 instigates 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 trying times 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's character 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).

12:7 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 discipline 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.

12:8 *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 disci-

pline from God is proof of their sonship. If there were no discipline, then there would be no sonship (Compare comments At 14:22).

12:9 *Respected:* An earthly son gives respect to the father even though the father administers the discipline. The son respects the father because he gives 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.

12:10 While we were in the days of our youth, our earthly fathers disciplined us according to their judgment. Our heavenly Father's discipline is continued throughout our lifetime as a Christian in order that we be suitable personalities that can dwell in a heavenly environment. Through discipline on earth, therefore, we develop a personality that will be suitable for our eternal dwelling with others.

12:11 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 discipline is necessary for one's spiritual growth, then one can consider it with joy (See comments Js 1:2,3). When one counts it with joy to be disciplined in order to be prepared for heaven, then he will not become bitter or complain in times of discipline (See Rm 8:28; Js 3:18).

ENCOURAGEMENT TO BE HOLY

12:12,13 *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 close fellowships that are 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 the fellowship of the disciples of Jesus, the stronger members are to exhort the weak in order that they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (Compare comments Rm 14).

12:14 *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; 1 Tm 2:2; see comments Rm 14; 1 Co 9; Gl 5:22,23). Each member must be known for forbearing 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). ***Holiness:*** The holy life is separated from the ways of the world. Holiness is a behavior of life the believer chooses 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).

12:15 The advantage of being a member of the community of God is the responsibility of caring for one another in reference to maintaining our 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, and thus 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 committing 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. They should help their fellow brothers and sisters from doing the same (See comments Gl 5:4; 2 Pt 2:20-22).

12:16 *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 might move him to commit the act (See comments Mt 5:28). The holy heart does not harbor motives that are looking for an opportunity to 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 and feelings that could possibly lead to sin if the opportunity presented itself (Js 1:14,15; 5:16).

12:17 *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). If those to whom the writer was addressing this message returned to the ceremonial religiosity of Judaism, they would give up their rights as sons of God. They would be severed from

Christ (Gl 5:1-6). If they would remain connected to Christ, then they must have faith in the grace of God.

MOUNT SINAI AND ZION

12:18-21 *The mountain:* When the nation of Israel came out of Egyptian captivity and 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 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).

12:22 *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 mentioned here to surround the throne of God in heaven (Dt 33:2; Dn 7:10; Rv 5:11).

12:23 *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 in order 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 the righteous:** 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).

12:24 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 a 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 a covenant relationship with God (At 20:28).

TAKE HEED TO LISTEN

12:25 In contrast to those under the Sinai 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).

12:26 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 will be greater than the former*" (Hg 2:9). The Hebrews were a part of the glorious temple, the church of the first-born ones who had come out of sin and into a covenant relationship with God (See 1 Co 3:16,17). This glorious temple was established in Acts 2 when about 3,000 people initially submitted to the lordship of its Builder (At 2:41,47; see Mt 16:18,19).

12:27 *Removing of those things that can be shaken:* What was being shaken away was the Sinai law and covenant. In this context the writer is looking to the near future when national Israel 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 (Compare comments 2 Pt 3:10-13). When God shakes, that which is unrighteous is shaken out in order that the righteous continue.

12:28,29 *We are receiving a kingdom:* One receives the kingdom reign of Jesus when he voluntarily submits 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; 1 Co 15:10). ***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). God brings to an end that which has served its purpose. National Israel was brought into existence for the purpose of bringing the Savior into the world. But now that the Savior had come into the world, national Israel had fulfilled her purpose for existence.

Chapter 13

WELL-PLEASING SERVICE TO GOD

13:1 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. **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 or she is of a nature that can dwell in eternity with others forever.

13:2 *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, as many fleeing Jews were at the time this letter was written. Hospitality 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 6:11 ff; 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 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). When one was hospitable to a fellow brother in Christ as he passed through, he may have been entertaining a messenger of God as he went on his way preaching the gospel.

13:3 *Those ... in chains:* These were those who were in bonds for preaching 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.

13:4 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 disciples of Jesus. Though fornication, adultery and polygamy are 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).

13:5,6 *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). 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.

13:7 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. Barsabas and Silas were not leading authorities among the brethren in Jerusalem. They were leading in the ministry of edification and evangelism. The writer is stating that the readers should submit to the ministry of those who have given their lives to teaching the word of God (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). They must follow the example of the faith and work 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 to others 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 disciples. Therefore, it was the Spirit working through the prophets who delivered the spoken word of God to the churches.

13:8,9 In this context, reference is to the teaching of Jesus. Since Jesus is unchanging in His eternality, 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. ***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 disciple must allow himself to be equipped in order that he not be tossed to and fro by different false teachings (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). It is for this reason that every Christian must be a student of the word of God (2 Tm 2:15). He must measure every teaching by what he personally studies in the Bible (At 17:11). ***Established by grace:*** One is established by grace in the sense that his response to the grace of God leads him to obey the One from whom all grace has come (Compare 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). 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).

13:10-12 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, then there is no need for the futile offering of animal sacrifices that cannot take away sin (10:1-4). ***Outside the camp:*** The bodies of the sacrifices of the Sinai law 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. ***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).

13:13 The Jewish readers to whom the writer was addressing this letter, must break their ties with the ceremonial Judaism from which they were delivered. 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 must accept the same reproach that was heaped upon Jesus when He went to the cross of Golgotha (1 Pt 2:21,22; 4:14). It was the religious leaders of Israel who took Jesus to the cross. The recipients of this letter would suffer the same persecution at the hands of Jews who were rebellious in accepting Jesus as the Messiah.

13:14,15 ***Not have a continuing city:*** The Jewish Christians' faith must not be in the physical Jerusalem and temple. In only a few years from the time of the writing of this letter, Jerusalem and the temple were to be done away (See comments Mt 24; Lk 21). The heavenly city wherein is registered the citizenship of every Christian, however, is a continuing city that is eternal in the heavens (Hb 11:10). ***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).

13:16 ***Doing good:*** Christians must do that which is

good to all men, but especially to those who are fellow disciples (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 4:15; 9:12; Ph 4:18). The fact that the Hebrew writer had to make this exhortation indicates that doing good works is often forgotten by those who become idle (See comments Js 2:14-26). They forget that we are created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ep 2:10).

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

13:17 *Leading:* As in verse 7 and 24, the Greek word here refers to leading as it is translated in Acts 15:22 in reference to the ministry of Barsabas and Silas. As explained in verse 7, Christians must submit themselves to those who lead through their ministry of edification and teaching of the word of God (See comments 1 Co 16:15,16). Disciples must be submissive to one another in the sense that they submit to one another's service (Ep 6:21). ***Submissive:*** The submission here is not as to a dictator who leads by instilling fear within the hearts of those who are to follow. It is not in reference to submitting to lords or authorities, for Jesus said that there would be no lords or authorities among His disciples (See comments Mk 10:35-45). Emphasis is on one submitting to the example and ministry of another disciple who leads through the example of his life and teaching of the word of God. The verse explains what is meant. ***They watch:*** Those who have dedicated themselves to minister to the needs of the saints, have assumed the responsibility of leading people by the example of their lives (See comments 1 Pt 5:1-4). Their leadership, therefore, is in what they teach from the word of God and illustrate in their own lives. We must submit to their service, for through their service they lead. 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 would be the reaction of those who feel that they have some authority over the flock of God. As in 1 Corinthians 16:15,16, the admonition here is to the church. It is the responsibility of the disciples to submit to the ministry example of those among them who have given themselves to lead through teaching the word and edification. Their submission, therefore, is to the word of God that is taught through the messenger who teaches and the living example of his message (See comments 1 Tm 4:12).

13:18 *Pray for us:* The writer again emphasizes the fact that the brotherhood of believers extends beyond the disciples of any local area. 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). The church is a global community of believers who have submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus. When one is added to the church, therefore, he is added to this community of believers (At 2:47).

13:19 *That I may be restored to you:* In this case, God could answer the prayer in order to return the writer to those to whom he wrote. 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 in order 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 even in the lives of Christians today.

13:20,21 *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 took care of the sin problem of the sheep (Zc 9:11; Mt 26:26-29; Hb 10:29). ***In every good work:*** Christians do not do good works in vain if they are 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).

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.

13:23 *Timothy is set at liberty:* Timothy was surely one for whom they had prayed in the past that he be set free from prison (vss 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.

13:24,25 Greet all those who lead: The Greek word for “lead” 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” those who lead. The implication is, therefore, that these leaders were not usually present among the immediate readers as leaders. The reference would thus be to the teachers who were moving among the disciples as Barsabas and Silas. Barsabas and Silas were leading brethren because they were teachers 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 the teaching of these 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 application today would be to submit to the teaching of the word of God. Those who lead in teaching must be given the opportunity to teach the word of God. Our discipleship is determined by our willingness to share in the teaching of the word of God (See At 17:11).

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pi**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**