

# Hebrews

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## Table of Contents

**Introduction to Hebrews .....4**  
*Jeff Smelser*

**Merciful and Faithful High Priest .....18**  
*Winston Bowen*

**Entering God's Rest .....28**  
*Kyle Bennett*

**We Have Such a High Priest .....42**  
*Joe Works*

**The Better in Christ's Priesthood, Covenant, and Sacrifice .....50**  
*David Kippe*

**Faith Unto the Saving of the Soul .....72**  
*Chase Byers*

**Pursue Peace ... and Holiness .....110**  
*Roger Polanco*

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# Introduction to Hebrews

*Jeff Smelser*

## I. Introductory Comments

While there are different views and lengthy discussions of the identity of the author and recipients of this letter, I don't intend to present a thorough discussion of these things. Rather I intend to highlight evidence that I believe supports my view of the letter, not only regarding the recipients, but especially regarding its purpose, and how the purpose of the letter is related to the date of its composition. Then I will close with some brief thoughts about the author.

In brief, rather than seeing this letter as an address to backsliding Jewish believers (“on the verge of falling away”<sup>1</sup>), I see it as having been written to stagnant Jewish believers, stagnant in the sense that they had not progressed very far in leaving behind the ceremonial observances of the Law. Moreover, due to the imminent (in my view) destruction of the temple and concomitant service of the Levitical priesthood, the letter is urgently needed to shore up the understanding of Jewish believers that they have everything they need in Christ, and that the loss of the Levitical temple service will be no hindrance to them. But they do need to prepare for hardship that will accompany the fall of Jerusalem and persevere in faith in way that their forefathers in the wilderness did not.

The letter is an exhortation more than a rebuke. The writer himself characterizes it that way: “But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation: for I have written unto you in few words.” (ASV)

## II. Recipients

A. Manifestly, the audience is made up of *Jews* who are *believers*.

### 1. They are Jews

- a. In a footnote, Ellingworth includes a list of commentators and scholars who, incredibly, have argued that the letter was written to a Gentile audience.<sup>2</sup>
- b. However, every indication is that the audience is made up of people who had always embraced the first covenant and needed to hear such things as “He takes away the first, that he may establish the second.”

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<sup>1</sup> McClister, David. *A Commentary on Hebrews*. Temple Terrace FL, Florida College Press, 2010. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993. 22. n 67.

- c. The writer is primarily concerned with emphasizing...
  - i. the superiority of Jesus' priesthood over the Levitical priesthood.
  - ii. the superiority of the heavenly sanctuary over the earthly.
  - iii. the superiority of the new covenant over the first covenant.
  - iv. and the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice over the animal sacrifices.
- d. There is no hint that the audience is made up of Gentiles who have had the law *wrongfully* imposed upon them (as in Galatians).
- e. They are urged to "go out to Him (Jesus) outside the camp" (Heb 13:13). Understanding "the camp" to be a reference to earthly Israel, Gentiles did not need to leave "the camp."

2. **That they are believers** is evident from such language as...

- a. "We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away," Heb 2:1.
- b. "Holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession—Jesus," Heb 3:1.
- c. "Whose house we are," Heb 3:6.
- d. "Let us fear, lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have fallen short of it... For we who have believed enter that rest," Heb 4:1-2.
- e. "Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us take hold of our confession," Heb 4:14.
- f. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope," Heb 10:23
- g. "you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one," Heb 10:34.
- h. "we are...of those who have faith and preserve their souls," Heb 10:39.

B. McClister is probably correct in deducing that this letter "was written to Jewish Christians in some particular locale"<sup>3</sup> rather than to all Jewish believers everywhere.

- 1. His reasoning: "If it were meant for all Jewish Christians everywhere...the author's hope to be reunited with them (13:23) would be meaningless."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> McClister. 19

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

2. Whether they were Jewish believers in Jerusalem or in some other location is a more difficult question.
  - a. Within the framework of my interpretation (which will be developed below), they were Jewish believers for whom the Temple service was still important, which might make it tempting to suppose the original audience consisted of Jewish believers in and around Jerusalem.
    - i. However, Jews from many remote places regularly visited Jerusalem for feast days.
  - b. If as suggested below, the “*the former days*” during which the readers endured “*a great conflict of sufferings*” (10:32) has reference to the persecution that began after the stoning of Stephen, a Jewish audience in Jerusalem and the surrounding area might seem likely.
    - i. However, Saul’s journey to Damascus is evidence that Jewish believers in other places also suffered during that persecution.
    - ii. Paul himself said, “*I persecuted them even unto foreign cities*” (Acts 26:11).
  - c. For me, the locale of the intended audience remains an open question, but Jerusalem with its environs seems most likely due to the language suggesting coming danger (10:25, 12:4).

### III. Date

#### A. Indications of Persecution in Prior Years

1. Heb 10:32-34 “*But remember **the former days**, when, **after being enlightened**, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through insults and distress, and partly by becoming companions with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better and lasting possession.*”
  - a. After becoming believers, the intended audience of this letter had suffered persecution.
  - b. It sounds very much like the persecution described in Acts 8:1, 3, 9:1f, 9:13 f, 9:21, 22:4f, 22:19f, 26:10f.
  - c. This persecution began in the middle of the 4th decade of the 1st century (the mid-30s) and continued until Saul’s conversion near the end of the decade.
  - d. Thereafter, “*the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed peace*” (Acts 9:31).

- e. However, after that, Herod Agrippa “*laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church*” and put James the apostle to death about A.D. 43 (Acts 12:1-2).
  - i. He was motivated to put Peter to death also because he saw that what he had done “*pleased the Jews*” (Acts 12:3-4).
  - ii. This indicates the degree of hostility that remained on the part of unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem toward those of the Way.
- f. Still later, c. A.D. 62, according to Josephus the High Priest Ananus had James the brother of Jesus and others stoned to death.<sup>5</sup>

## B. Indications that the Recipients were of a Later Generation

1. Heb 2:3, “*confirmed to us by them that heard*”
2. Heb 10:32, “*call to remembrance*”
3. Heb 13:7, “*remember them that had the rule over you*”
4. Ellingworth cites “various indications...that some time had elapsed since the readers first became Christians.”<sup>6</sup>
  - a. “They are in danger of ‘falling away from the living God’ (3:12)”<sup>7</sup>
  - b. “They ‘have become dull of hearing’ (5:11)”
  - c. “‘by this time [they] ought to be teachers’ (5:12), progressing beyond ‘the elementary doctrines of Christ’ (6:1)”
  - d. “They have a record of service to fellow-Christians (6:9); more specifically, to those undergoing hardship during a period of persecution which also affected the readers themselves (10:32-34).”
  - e. “Some Christians known to the readers have become lax in meeting for Christian fellowship (10:25).”
  - f. While Ellingworth estimates these things do not require “a time span of more than a few years,”<sup>8</sup> they do at least add to the picture of an audience that is beyond the first decade of the gospel.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, Ant. xx.200.

<sup>6</sup> Ellingworth. 30.

<sup>7</sup> As I see it, they weren’t so much in danger of falling away as they were in need of encouragement lest they should fall away. It is perhaps a subtle distinction, but an accurate one, I think.

<sup>8</sup> Ellingworth. 30.

### C. *Terminus a quo*

1. The facts that some time has passed since the recipients became Christians, that a time of persecution had come and gone (though more difficulties yet lay ahead), and that they could look back on their predecessors in the faith who had already passed on, all combine to suggest a *terminus a quo* for the date of this letter something like a “generation” after Jesus.

### D. *Terminus ad quem*: A.D. 70

1. Hebrews 8:5 indicates the temple is still in existence.
2. This gives us a *terminus ad quem* of A.D. 70.

### E. Narrowing the Range

1. The foregoing leaves a range of about three decades.
2. However, the book of Hebrews puts the Levitical priesthood in such a light that it is difficult to imagine it having been written at a date early in that range when James and even Paul were still countenancing, even encouraging, Jewish believers to avail themselves of the services of the Levitical priests.
3. A contrast between the events of Acts 21, which occurred in A.D. 56, and the message of Hebrews 8:4-10:18 pushes the date of Hebrews toward the 7th decade of the first century.
4. Timothy is said to have been “set at liberty” (Heb 13:23). Given that there is no indication of Timothy being imprisoned in the book of Acts, this phrase may suggest a date beyond the time covered in Acts, which would be sometime after the spring of 61.
5. Within the framework of my overall view of Hebrews, the phrase “the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25) is easily understood as a reference to the Roman assault upon Jerusalem. This makes a date in the mid to late 60’s likely.

## IV. The Relationship of the Date to the Message

- A. Many Jewish Christians continued to function in the context of Judaism even after becoming Christians, and many (especially in Judea) observed the law including participation in the temple service where they would have availed themselves of the services of the priests.
  1. Saul went “*to the synagogues*” looking for “*any belonging to the Way*” (Acts 9:2), and later confessed, “*in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed*” in Jesus (Acts 22:19).
  2. Jewish believers in Ephesus continued to function in the context of the synagogue for three months. It was only when opposition arose that Paul “*took away the disciples*” (Acts 19:8-9).



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3. In the context of Romans 14-15, the phrase “*One person judges one day above another*” (Romans 14:5) seems to be a reference to Jewish Christians who continued to observe the Sabbath and/or feast days.
  4. In Acts 21, James’ concerns & Paul’s compliance with James’ suggestion are evidence of Jewish believers continuing to observe the requirements of the Mosaic law.
    - a. James mentions “*how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law*” (Acts 21:20).
    - b. It was a matter of concern to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem if Paul were telling Jews “*to forsake Moses*” and “*telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs*” (Acts 21:21).
    - c. James said to Paul, “*purify yourself*” (Acts 21:24)
    - d. The goal was that Jewish believers who were zealous for the law would see that “*that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law*” (Acts 21:24).
    - e. Paul did so (Acts 21:26).
    - f. Note the role of the temple and of the priests in what Paul did (Numbers 6:10-20, Acts 21:26).
- B. If the destruction of the temple was near, what would that event do to the confidence of Jewish Christians who still thought they needed the temple and the services of the priests therein?
1. God had been patient with the first generation of Jewish believers, not expecting them to abandon the observance of the law immediately.
  2. But I believe God used the destruction of the temple to bring a *de facto* end to the observance of the outward forms of the Law
  3. Still, they needed to be prepared for this.
    - a. Hebrews assures them that they have a greater High Priest and don’t need the Levitical priesthood.
    - b. Hebrews tells them the outward forms of the law were mere shadows; the reality (“true,” 8:2, 9:24) is the spiritual.
    - c. Hebrews urges its readers to “*go out to Him outside the camp,*” i.e., let go of a Jewish identity based on the Law of Moses.
    - d. Hebrews prepares them for the suffering they may soon endure: Be faithful.

## V. The Flow of the Message (An Outline of Hebrews)

- A. Christ is greater than angels, so listen to Christ (1:1-2:4)
- B. Christ came as a man to be a High Priest on man's behalf (2:5-3:2)
1. The point that Christ came as a man to be a High Priest on behalf of man is anticipated in the argument that...
    - a. the world was not subjected to angels, but to man (2:5-2:8)
    - b. Jesus is the man through whom everything, including death, is ultimately subjected to man (2:9-13)
    - c. Jesus' priestly role required his becoming flesh to overcome death, for death had taken hold, not of angels, but of the seed of Abraham who are men of flesh. (2:14-17)
    - d. By becoming flesh, Jesus can be a merciful and faithful high priest (2:18)
  2. And finally, the anticipated point is affirmed that—Jesus is the faithful High Priest (3:1-2)
- C. Christ is greater than Moses, being over God's house in which Moses served. (3:3-6a)
- D. We are that house if we "*hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end.*" (3:6b)
1. Because Israel in the wilderness did not do this, they failed to enter God's rest (3:7-19)
  2. We must do better so that we may enter our rest. (4:1-13)
- This section (3:6b-4:13) might be viewed as a merely parenthetical section were it not for the emphasis upon persevering in faith, a theme that will be prominent later in the letter and which will be repeatedly stressed.*
- E. Jesus is our high priest 4:15-10:25

*In this section, especially in 7:1-10:25, the writer brings home the truth that there is no longer any need for the earthly temple and temple service with its priests and sacrifices.*

1. The nature of his priesthood (4:15-7:28)
2. Resumption of the idea introduced earlier, that Jesus is a sympathetic High Priest, with additional emphasis on the fact that, having passed through the heavens, he gives us access to God (4:15-16)

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3. Chiastic discussion showing that Jesus meets the basic requirements of a priest (5:1-10)
    - a. A high priest must be man (5:1a)
    - b. A high priest must be appointed by God (5:1b)
    - c. As a man “*compassed with infirmity*,” he can represent men making offerings for men and for himself (5:2-3)
    - d. As Aaron was, he must be appointed by God (5:4)
    - e. Christ was appointed by God after the order of Melchizedek (5:5-6)
    - f. Christ was compassed with infirmity, and made offerings for himself and save men (5:7-10)
  4. His priesthood, being after the order of Melchizedek, is better than the Levitical Priesthood (5:11-7:28)
    - a. Parenthetical admonition (5:11-6:20)
      - i. The readers needed to grow (5:11-14)
      - ii. The readers needed to move beyond the foundational teachings (repentance, faith, washings, laying on of hands, resurrection, judgment) that already had been established under the first covenant (6:1-8)
      - iii. The writer expresses confidence in his readers, exhorting them to be diligent to the end, and reminding them of Abraham’s perseverance looking to the promise of God (6:9-20).
    - b. As a priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus is a better priest than the Levitical Priests (7:1-28) because...
      - i. Melchizedek outranked Abraham, from whom the Levitical priests descended (7:1-10)
      - ii. The Levitical priesthood was established by a law that has been disannulled (7:11-21)
      - iii. Jesus’ priesthood is established by a better covenant under which a sacrifice has been made once for all (7:22-28)
  5. The sanctuary of his priesthood (8:1-10:18)
    - a. Jesus’ priesthood pertains to a heavenly sanctuary (8:1-5)
-

- i. From the moment Jeremiah prophesied of the new covenant, the former covenant was becoming obsolete, “nigh unto vanishing away.” (8:6-13)
- ii. Jesus’ sanctuary is not made with hands whereas the sanctuary of the first covenant was “of this world.” (9:1-11)
- iii. Jesus’ sanctuary is cleansed with better sacrifices (9:12-10:18)
- b. Admonition to “enter in to the holy place by the blood of Jesus” (10:19-25)
- F. The writer reinforces the need to persevere in faith (10:26-12:29).

*This calls to mind the earlier description of Israel in the wilderness who fell due to “unbelief” (3:7-19).*

- G. The letter concludes with practical admonitions and exhortations (Hebrews 13).

## VI. Themes and Stylistic Characteristics in Hebrews

### A. Persevering in the Face of Hardships

1. “if indeed we hold fast” (3:4)<sup>9</sup>
2. “show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end” (6:11)
3. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (10:23)
4. “For you have need of endurance” (10:36)
5. “let us run with endurance” (12:1)
6. “Consider him who endured...so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted” (12:3)
7. “you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (12:4)
8. “It is for discipline that you have to endure” (12:7)
9. Notice that in four of the above cited passages, either the noun ὑπομονή (*perseverance, endurance*) or the verb ὑπομένω (*persevere, endure*) is used. This fits well with the view that Hebrews was written in anticipation of the destruction of Jerusalem.

### B. Positive outlook

1. The warning passages are generally not, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him,” nor “Who has bewitched you,” nor “I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain,” nor “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace,” as in Galatians.

<sup>9</sup> The words “firm unto the end” or “firmly unto the end” are variant readings not found in all manuscripts. The former phrase, “Firm unto the end” (μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν), has strong manuscript support.

2. The warning passages are generally preventative (quotations are from the ESV):
  - a. *“lest we drift away”* (2:1)
  - b. *“how shall we escape if we neglect”* (2:3)
  - c. *“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away”* (3:12)
  - d. *“But exhort one another every day...that none of you may be hardened”* (3:13)
  - e. *“while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it”* (4:1)
  - f. *“Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall”* (4:11)
3. Even the strongest indictment found in the letter is more of an admonition than a condemnation.
  - a. In Hebrews 5:12, the writer clearly indicates a deficiency.
  - b. However, the tone differs from what we see in Galatians.
  - c. The indictment leads to an admonition (6:1-2) which the writer confidently believes his readers will heed (6:3, 9).
4. The writer has an optimistic outlook regarding his readers
  - a. *“And this we will do if God permits.”* (6:3)
  - b. *“yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things”* (6:9)
  - c. *“we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls”* (10:39)
5. This fits well with the view that the letter was not written to believers who were backsliding, or about to fall away, that it was written to believers who needed to have their faith shored up in view of the coming conflict.
6. This also fits well with the conjecture that Barnabas was the author. (See below.)

### **C. A Fortiori Arguments**

1. Heb 2:2-3
2. Heb 9:13-14
3. Heb 10:28-29
4. Heb 12:9
5. Heb 12:25

## VII. Author

- A. The identity of the author is apparently unimportant for us, though likely known to the 1st century readers.
- B. It was not written by Paul!
1. It is unimaginable that he could discuss (his?) victims' sufferings in the language of Hebrews 10:32-34 without acknowledging his own part in their suffering.
  2. This is all the more true given that in other letters, Paul mentions his persecution of the church (1 Cor 15:9, Gal 1:23, 1 Tim 1:12f, Phil 3:6).
- C. If we wish to speculate concerning the identity of the author, my favorite candidate is Barnabas.
1. Barnabas was a Levite (Acts 5:36), which is fitting, given the content of the letter.
  2. Given what we know of Barnabas, he would have been an apt communicator of the positive outlook that we see in the letter.
    - a. 6:6, 6:9, 10:39
    - b. See above, VI.B.4.
  3. Other than Paul, Barnabas is the only one to whom the letter was attributed in early times.
    - a. In *De Pudicitia* ("On Modesty"), Tertullian quoted most of Hebrews 6:1-8 and unequivocally attributed the letter to Barnabas, calling it "the Epistle of Barnabas" as well as "the Epistle to the Hebrews."
    - b. Tertullian's testimony regarding the authorship of Hebrews, probably written in A.D. 217 or shortly thereafter, is among the earliest attributions that have come down to us.
      - i. We should acknowledge that at about the same time or a bit earlier, some others were already attributing the letter to Paul.
      - ii. According to Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria said Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language, and Luke translated it into Greek.<sup>10</sup> Clement's extant writings were produced from A.D. 195 to 203.
      - iii. Again, according to Eusebius, "the blessed elder," (thought to be Pantaenus, Clement's mentor) attributed the letter to Paul.<sup>11</sup>
    - c. The purpose of Tertullian's work, *De Pudicitia* ("On Modesty"), was to denounce a decree by the bishop of Rome that permitted fornicators and adulterers to be received back into the communion of the church.

<sup>10</sup> Eusebius, Eccl Hist vi.xiv.2

<sup>11</sup> Eusebius, Eccl Hist vi.xiv.3-4

- d. Tertullian compared the general reception of Hebrews to that of the Shepherd of Hermas, saying Hebrews was “more generally received among the Churches than that apocryphal shepherd of adulterers.”
- e. He described Barnabas as a “comrade of the apostles,” and mentioned what Paul said about him in 1 Corinthians 9.
- f. I include here the first paragraph of chapter 20 of *De Pudicitia*:

The discipline, therefore, of the apostles properly (so called), indeed, instructs and determinately directs, as a principal point, the overseer of all sanctity as regards the temple of God to the universal eradication of every sacrilegious outrage upon modesty, without any mention of restoration. I wish, however, redundantly to superadd the testimony likewise of one particular comrade of the apostles, — (a testimony) aptly suited for confirming, by most proximate right, the discipline of his masters. For there is extant withal an Epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas — a man sufficiently accredited by God, as being one whom Paul has stationed next to himself in the uninterrupted observance of abstinence: “Or else, I alone and Barnabas, have not we the power of working?” And, of course, the Epistle of Barnabas is more generally received among the Churches than that apocryphal “Shepherd” of adulterers. Warning, accordingly, the disciples to omit all first principles, and strive rather after perfection, and not lay again the foundations of repentance from the works of the dead, he says: “For impossible it is that they who have once been illuminated, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have participated in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the word of God and found it sweet, when they shall — their age already setting — have fallen away, should be again recalled unto repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and dishonouring Him.” “For the earth which hath drunk the rain often descending upon it, and hath borne grass apt for them on whose account it is tilled withal, attaineth God's blessing; but if it brings forth thorns, it is reprobate, and nighest to cursing, whose end is (doomed) unto utter burning.” He who learnt this *from* apostles, and taught it *with* apostles, never knew of any “second repentance” promised by apostles to the adulterer and fornicator.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> ANF04. Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second. *De Pudicitia* 20. [https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04/anf04/Page\\_97.html](https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04/anf04/Page_97.html) [https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/1976/1333.04\\_Bk.pdf](https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/1976/1333.04_Bk.pdf)

### VIII. Conclusion

The Lord did not require Jews to abandon observance of the Law of Moses immediately upon being baptized into Christ during the years covered by the book of Acts. The Law had been their guardian, leading them to Christ. Paul himself did not see his baptism as marking a rejection of his prior religion. As an apostle of Jesus Christ, he saw himself as an advocate of the very same hope of the promise God made to the fathers of the Jewish nation. Naturally then, many Jewish believers continued in the observances of that Law that had prepared them for the Messiah. There would come a time when the temple service would be terminated, but the Lord saw fit to allow time for the first generation of Jewish Christians to gain perspective concerning the fulfilment of the law.

Ultimately however, by means of the destruction of the temple, there would come a *de facto* end of the observance of the temple service. As that time approached, the book of Hebrews was written to prepare Jewish Christians lest they be discouraged by the loss of the temple service, and in the midst of great societal and personal hardship, fail to persevere to the end.

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## Merciful and Faithful High Priest

*Winston Bowen*

**Text:** Hebrews 1-2

### Hebrews Chapter 1

#### The Preeminence of the Messenger

- I. Note, everything the Hebrew writer is saying, he's doing so for a purpose, he's making a point. He says so explicitly in Hebrews 8:1 (Now the point of what we are saying is this...) but we can see him making points time and time again for his readers to understand.
- II. Verse 1
  - A. How did God speak to His people long ago?
    1. Visions: Gen. 46:2; Ezek. 1:1; Dan. 8:2; 10:8, 16; Luke 1:11, 22; Acts 10:11; 22:17, 18
    2. Dreams: Gen. 20:6; 31:10, 11; 1 Kgs. 3:5; Job 33:15; Matt. 1:20; 27:19
    3. Numbers 12:6-9 (ESV) 6 And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. 7 Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed.
- III. Verse 2-4
  - A. How does God speak to us today?
    1. Through His son.
    2. Does this mean that God did not speak through any prophet after Jesus life and death?
      - a) No, there were prophets in the New Testament: Daughters of Phillip, Agabus, Peter (dream about Gentiles), Paul (Shipwreck), etc....
    1. So, what's the point?
      - a) In both cases, it's still a message coming from God, but the message is emphasized through the prominence of the messenger
        - (1) **Luke 20:9-18**
          - (a) **Sent 3 servants who were disrespected**
          - (b) **And then he said "Luke 20:13 (ESV) 13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'"**
        - (2) Same message from the master in all 4 instances, but the prominence of the master sending his son should have warranted even more respect and importance of the message.
      - b) Likewise today, God is delivering the His Word that He delivered through the prophets that are fulfilled through Jesus, but the fact that He is delivering the message through His Son warrants even greater respect from the recipients

- c) Son (Verses 2-4)
  - (1) whom he appointed the heir of all things,
  - (2) through whom also he created the world.
  - (3) 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,
  - (4) and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
  - (5) After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

#### **B. Jesus also more prominent than angels**

- a) 1st of all, why even mention the angels? We were talking about how Jesus is a greater messenger than the prophets.

- (1) The angels were also messengers of God's word.

##### **(a) Deuteronomy 33:1-2 (NASB) The Blessing of Moses**

**1 Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death. 2 He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.**

- (b) Acts 7:38 (NASB) **38 This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.**

- (c) Acts 7:53 (NASB) **53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."**

- (d) Galatians 3:19 (NASB) **19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.**

- (e) Hebrews 2:2 (NASB) **2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,**

##### **b) The Angels were messengers of the Law of Moses**

#### **C. Not only is Jesus a more prominent messenger than the prophets, He's also a more prominent messenger than the angels**

- a) Verse 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

- 
1. How Is Jesus greater than the angels
    - a) 5-7
      - (1) Jesus is a son
      - (2) Angels worship Jesus
      - (3) Jesus has authority over angels
    - b) 8-9
      - (1) On the throne
      - (2) Jesus is God
    - c) 10
      - (1) Jesus is the creator, angels are created
      - (2) Jesus is eternal, Jesus is everlasting
      - (3) Jesus has authority over when the creation ends or be destroyed
    - d) 13
      - (1) God speaking to Jesus, to sit at His right hand
        - (a) Psalm 110, God speaking to Jesus
        - (b) Acts 2:34-36 tells us that God is speaking to Jesus
    - e) 14
      - (1) What are Angels
        - (a) They are just servants
          - i) Servant vs. son
            - (1) Inheritance
            - (2) Privileges
            - (3) Authority

## II. Why is he making a big deal of this comparison, who ever said that the angels are on the same playing field as Jesus?

1. For example, no one ever bother even asking the question if Winston Bowen is a greater a basketball player than Michael Jordan, it's not even a question worth asking, given how clearly evident the answer is... NO!
2. The recipient of the book of Hebrews are Christians
  - a) And I would submit that if you asked the recipients of the book of Hebrews if Jesus is greater than the prophets, they would say yes. Is Jesus greater than the angels, they would say yes.
  - b) But they are facing suffering and hardships, and somehow if they were to go back to the law, it would seemingly relieve some of the hardships they are suffering.
    - (1) We see this throughout the New Testament where Jews who became Christians faced persecution from other Jews
      - (a) Kicked out of the synagogue

- 
- i) **John 9:22 (ESV) 22 (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.)**
  - ii) **John 12:42 (ESV) 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;**
  - (b) Judaizing Christians in fear of their persecution from associating with gentile
    - i) **Galatians 6:12 (ESV) 12 It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.**
  - (c) Peter disassociating with gentiles and even Barnabas being led astray because some influence from Jewish Christians
  - (2) It could also be coming from the government, we see there are times that the Jews are targeted specifically, Acts 18:2. And we know there are times in history where Christians were targeted by the government, such as Nero in ~ AD 64
  - (3) Wherever it may be coming from, either from Jews or from gentiles, these Hebrews (presumably Jewish Christians) are tempted to go back to the law of Moses
  - (4) If you would ask them, is Jesus greater than the angels, they would likely say yes. Is Jesus greater than Moses, they would likely say yes. But their actions, in leaning towards returning to the 1st covenant, demonstrates that they don't really believe that
    - i) But these Christians are acting like the angels are superior to Jesus, that Moses is superior to Jesus, when they are upholding the law over the new covenant
  - (a) **This is an important lesson that we must learn. Many times, if people ask us, we can give the correct response. We can profess the right theological statements, but our actions can demonstrate we really don't believe that to be true**
    - i) We say that our treasure is in heaven, but we don't really believe that if we expend our every waking moment to amass a treasure on earth and begrudge any giving that slows down that process
    - ii) We can say the Jesus is the Lord and master of our life, but we don't really believe that when we turn to a politician to be our savior
    - iii) We say that God is Holy and are body is the temple of the Lord, we don't really believe that when we defile ourselves by engaging in pornography
  - (b) Thank God for encouraging brethren who are willing to call us out when we walk out of step with the Gospel
-

**(1) Galatians 2:11, when Paul saw that Peter's conduct was not WALKING in step with the Gospel, he opposed him to his face**

- i) Thank God for Paul who was willing to correct and rebuke Peter when his actions contradicted his professions, so that he would not be condemned before God
- ii) May we surround ourselves with brethren like Paul who will hold us accountable rather than coddling us while we are throwing away our souls
- iii) And may we be willing to stand up like Paul when something is unpopular by other professing brethren and be willing to speak the uncomfortable truth.

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## Hebrews Chapter 2

### Superior Message From A Superior Messenger

#### III. Verse 1

#### A. So, what is the point? If Jesus is superior to the prophets, if Jesus is superior to the angels, what does that mean for the Hebrew Christians?

1. So what? If Jesus is far superior to the prophets, if He is far superior to the angels, then we must listen even more attentively to the message that God delivers through Him
  - (1) We can't think, 'ohh I'm right with God if I just follow the prophets and the law, but neglect what Jesus is telling me.'
  - (2) And maybe we would not say that out loud, but we can't even act in such a way.
2. We must pay careful attention to Jesus' words and examine our lives in light of those words to determine if our actions and walk are in-step with the Gospel or out of step with the Gospel.
  - (1) If I'm not paying attention that closely, if I'm not examining and evaluating, if I don't have other faithful brethren in my life to watch out for me, it will be easy for me to drift away.
    - (a) Slowly, gradually, imperceptibly drift further and further away from the truth
    - (b) It would have been a blessing if Peter had prayerfully and humbly considered, is the way I am acting towards the gentiles in step with the Gospel?
    - (c) We need to be doing so on a daily basis and asking God to open our eyes, like David, to our hidden faults
3. If not, the consequence will be even more severe than if we neglected the messaged declared by angels.
  - (1) If you disobeyed the old law, it would lead to death
  - (2) If we disobey Jesus, then our souls would be in peril

#### B. How can they have confidence in this message?

1. **Hebrews 2:3-4 (ESV) It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**
  - a) It was declared at first by the Lord,
  - b) and it was attested to us by those who heard
  - c) while God also bore witness by
    - (1) signs and wonders and various miracles
    - (2) and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will

#### IV. Who will have everything subjected to Him, under who's authority will we be in heaven?

##### A. Not Angels, but Jesus

**Hebrews 2:5-8 (ESV) 5 For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. 6 It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? 7 You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, 8 putting everything in subjection under his feet."**

##### a) Everything will be under His control

**(1) Hebrews 2:8 "...(ESV) Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control."**

##### 1. And we know this by faith.

##### a) The entire prophecy has not yet been fulfilled

(1) The age to come where everything is under subjection by Jesus has not been witnessed

(2) But we do know that it is in motion because the 1st part of the prophecy has been fulfilled and witnessed

**i) Hebrews 2:8-9 (ESV) "... At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. 9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."**

##### (a) Fulfilled

i) Jesus made lower than the angels for a little while

ii) Crowned with glory and honor

(1) Because of suffering death, so that by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone

##### (b) To come

i) Everything in subjection to in subjection

#### V. Why did God crown Jesus this way? Crowning Jesus through the suffering and the sacrifices that He made?

##### A. How are kings typically crowned?

a) If a crown prince, growing up pampered in luxury and privileged, domineering over all even as a youth (little tyrant) because he and everyone else knows that he will ascend to the throne

b) If a conquering usurper, ruthlessly overthrowing the ruling party and wielding an iron fist, lavishing in the spoils of His victory



1. But those are earthly kings ruling over earthly kingdoms. Jesus is a heavenly king ruling over an eternal kingdom. And the Kingdom of Heaven is in many ways opposite to the kingdoms of this world. Kingdoms of this world are like a pyramid scheme where the ruler is on top and everyone below is serving him.
  - (1) The kingdom of heaven is an upside-down kingdom, and upside down pyramid, where those on top are humbly and meekly serving everyone else.
  - a) The messiah was prophesied in Isaiah 53 to be the suffering servant.
  - b) And those who want to enter in His kingdom must follow in the example of their savior, humbly serving and washing the feet of the disciples, sacrificing and giving rather than seeking everything to be given to him and everyone else to sacrifice for him.

## B. How do we grow to develop this way of thinking?

### 1. How was Jesus perfected?

- a) **Hebrews 2:10 (ESV) 10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.**
- b) Jesus was perfect not because he never faced anything difficult. But he proved His perfection by faithfully enduring the most difficult trials.
  - (1) What Jesus endured was not easy. The Garden of Gethsemane was not easy for Jesus. In suffering and Agony, he faithfully submitted to the will of God.
    - (a) That is true submission. Submitting when what God wants us to do is what we already want to do is easy. But true test of our submission is when what God wants us to do is different than what we want to do.
      - i) Jesus did not want to face the bitter cup, but what he desired even more than His will, was following the will of God
      - ii) And through his example of great perseverance through the greatest of hardships, proved His perfection.
    - (b) And Jesus is the founder of our salvation, the trailblazer of Christianity. And everyone who will follow after him must also be perfected through the suffering and hardships that they will endure.
      - i) And when we faithfully follow Christ example, we are adopted into the family of God, so that the Son of God proudly calls us brothers and sisters.

**Hebrews 2:11-13 (ESV) 11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying,**

**“I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”**

**13 And again,**

**“I will put my trust in him.”**

**And again,**

**“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”**

- (c) Suffering helps us to put things in perspective and to perfect our faith to be more and more like our savior, founder, and brother

### C. And Conqueror!

1. **Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV) 14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**

- a) Jesus destroys the one who has power through death, the devil
- b) Liberates all those who have been enslaved by the devil because of their fear of death

2. **How are people who are fear death subject to lifelong slavery?**

- a) What happens when your greatest fear in life is your life coming to an end?
  - (1) Humans have developed slogans many times over in every generation with how the world deals with this fear
    - (a) “Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”
    - (b) “YOLO – you only live once”
  - (2) When we live like this, we try to squeeze every bit of enjoyment, pleasure, comfort, satisfaction we can in every waking moment
- b) How does that work out for us?
  - (1) Are we happier, are we more fulfilled, do we find satisfaction when living this way
  - (2) It’s like trying to quench the thirst of a dessert. No matter how much we drink, we never feel satisfied.
  - (3) When all we have is this life, and we are terrified of death, we are dying of thirst – like Jesus tells the Samaritan woman in John 4
    - (a) And we become enslaved to sin
- c) **And Sin is a cruel master; it seeks to completely dominate and rule over us**
  - (1) Like God warned Cain in Genesis 4:3, sin is crouching at your door, its desire is for, you must master it.
    - (a) Implying that if Cain does not master sin, sin will master him. And that’s what we saw.
      - i) No one says to themselves, I want to my mugshot to make the news.
        - (1) But one little sin, leads to another, then another, until we can’t believe the things that we have done.
      - ii) I don’t think Cain thought that he would be capable of murdering his blood brother. But he allowed sin to enslave him.
        - (1) And the same happens to us when our fear of death leads us to live for this life on earth, we become enslaved to sin

### D. Praise God for our Conquering savior!!!

- 1. He destroyed Satan’s power in defeating death.
  - a) Not only did he win the victory, but He also gives us the power and example of how to overcome the bondage of sin, to do what Cain did not, to rule over sin rather than have sin to rule over us

2. And He helps his brothers and sisters, the children of faith, the offspring of Abraham to be delivered from enslavement and bondage to sin. He did not do this for the angel's benefit, but for the benefit of his brothers and sisters.

**a) Hebrews 2:16-18 (ESV) 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

(1) Merciful and faithful high priest

(a) All the high priests should have had mercy, because they recognized they needed mercy themselves. Before offering a sacrifice for the sins of the people, they also offered a sacrifice for themselves.

(b) But they couldn't say they were completely faithful, because they also engaged in sins.

i) It's like having someone who cannot swim watching you drown. They can empathize with you well enough. Sympathize with how difficult of a position you are in and recognize how hard it must be. But they cannot jump in the water and save you, because they can't even save themselves.

(c) Not the case for Jesus!! He's merciful AND he is FAITHFUL.

i) He can empathize. He knows how hard things can be. He's endured the worst of the worst. He has sympathy and compassion.

(1) He recognizes we are like sheep without a shepherd.

ii) But He also is faithful, he can do something about it. He can deliver us. He can SAVE US!!

(1) Praise GOD!!

**3. Hebrews 2:18 (ESV) 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

a) So when we are tempted, we can turn to Jesus for the strength to overcome sin, rather than allowing sin to enslave us. Praise God for this life-saving Gospel!  
**Why would we ever want to turn back to the Law of Sin and Death?**

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## Entering God's Rest

*Kyle Bennett*

Text: Hebrews 3:1-4:13

### Background Information

#### Textual Context

- Overall Message of Hebrews
  - Purpose for writing:
    - Christians are losing their confidence and assurance in God's plan.
      - They had grown weary from persecution.
      - Their weariness led them to stop growing in their knowledge about God, Christ, and his promises.
      - Their stagnation in knowledge led them to being deceived by temptations and sin.
      - They are in danger of giving up.
    - The writer wants to encourage them to keep going.
      - The letter highlights the surpassing greatness of Jesus and the promises.
      - It warns of the dangers of sin and giving up – by showing what happened to their fathers who gave up.
      - The letter encourages the readers to be confident in the Lord and be fully assured in their faith.
  - Simple theme:
    - Look to Jesus. Don't give up on your walk. Remain faithful.
  - Key verse:
    - *Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- Hebrews 1-2
  - God spoke to us by his Son – who is much superior to angels. (Heb. 1)
  - If God punished those who did not obey the message of angels, then how much more must we pay attention to the message from Jesus, God's Son. (Heb. 2:1-4)
    - We will not escape, if we neglect such a great salvation given to us by God. (Heb. 2:3)
  - Jesus calls us brothers. (Heb. 2:10-13)
  - Jesus shares with us in flesh and blood. (Heb. 2:14,17)

- Jesus delivers his brothers from death through his own suffering. (Heb. 2:14-15)
- Jesus helps his brothers when they are tempted because he suffered when he was tempted. (Heb. 2:18)
- Hebrews 4:14-5:10
  - We can confidently draw near for mercy and grace because we have a greater high priest who was appointed by God, did not sin when he was tempted, and became the source of salvation – Jesus Christ.
    - *Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

## Biblical Context

- Moses – faithful as a servant in all God's house (see Hebrews 3:5)
  - Reference to story from Numbers 12:1-9
  - Aaron and Miriam confront Moses saying, “Has the Lord indeed only spoken through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?” (Num. 12:2)
  - The Lord responds to their complaint by calling Aaron, Miriam, and Moses to meet him at the tent of meeting.
  - *Numbers 12:6-9 – “And [the Lord] said, “Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed.”*
- Psalm 95 (verses 7-11 quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11)
  - Overall message of Psalm:
    - Let's praise God and enter into his presence (see God for who he is). Don't be like our fathers who hardened their hearts in the wilderness and did not enter his rest (don't test him).
  - Psalm of praise to God:
    - Praise words in psalm: sing, joyful noise, come into his presence with thanksgiving, songs of praise
  - See God for who he is (descriptions of God):
    - Rock of our salvation, Great God, Great King above all gods, Creator, Maker, Shepherd
  - See your relationship to God:
    - We are the people of his pasture, sheep of his hand
  - Don't test God (warning to God's people):
    - Don't be like our fathers who tested God in the wilderness and did not enter his rest.
- Israel in the wilderness not entering Promised Land
  - Hardened hearts at Meribah and Massah in the wilderness

- Reference Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13; Deuteronomy 6:16
- Rebelled against God and did not enter Promised Land
  - Reference Numbers 13-14
  - *Numbers 14:20-23 – “Then the LORD said, “I have pardoned, according to your word. But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it.”*
- God rested on the seventh day (see Hebrews 4:4)
  - Reference Genesis 2:1-3
- Sabbath rest for Israel (see Hebrews 4:9)
  - Reference Exodus 20:8-11
  - Other references: Exodus 31:15-17; Leviticus 23:3-39; Deuteronomy 5:12-15

## Exposition of Hebrews 3:1-4:13

### Structure/Outline of Text

- 3:1-6 – Faithfulness in God’s house
  - Jesus is greater than Moses.
    - Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house.
    - Jesus is the faithful Son over God’s house.
  - We are God’s house, IF we remain faithful.
- 3:7-11 – Quotation of Psalm 95:7-11
- 3:12-4:13 – Exposition of Psalm 95:7-11 -- Take care, lest you miss out on God’s promised rest
  - 3:12-19 – Take care to not make the same mistakes
    - Israel’s failure in the wilderness
    - Don’t be hardened by sin and fall away
    - Hold your confidence firm to the end
    - Exhort one another every day
  - 4:1:1-10 – The promise of entering God’s rest remains
    - Why Israel failed to enter God’s rest
    - How we can enter God’s rest
    - What is God’s rest?
  - 4:11-13 – Strive to enter God’s rest by obeying his word
    - Learn from Israel’s failure
    - Listen to God’s living word

## Main Point of Text

You are called to share with Christ in God's house if you remain faithful to the end. Therefore, take care to not fall like Israel in the wilderness and miss out on God's rest.

### Hebrews 3:1-6 – Faithfulness in God's house

- Jesus is greater than Moses.
  - In these verses, the writer compares Jesus with Moses.
    - Both were a part of God's house.
    - Both were faithful in their roles in God's house.
    - But, it is in their roles that Jesus is shown to be greater than Moses.
      - Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant.
      - Jesus was faithful over God's house as a son.
      - Which makes Jesus, as verse 3 states, worthy of more glory than Moses.
  - But, why is the writer bringing this up? Why is he comparing Jesus to Moses?
    - The statement that Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant gives us a clue.
    - It is a reference to Numbers 12.
      - This is the story when Aaron and Miriam confront Moses saying, "Has the Lord only spoken through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?"
      - The Lord responds by calling Aaron, Miriam and Moses to meet him at the tent of meeting.
      - Then, God said this...
    - *Numbers 12:6-9 - And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed.*
      - The Hebrew writer references this story about Moses to make a greater point about Jesus.
    - Here is the point:
      - If God was angry with Aaron and Miriam for speaking against his servant Moses, how much more angry would God be if Christians do not honor Jesus – his son.
      - The Hebrew writer stated this same idea earlier in chapters 1 and 2 when he compared Jesus to angels showing that he is greater.
        - Then, the writer said that we must pay much closer attention to Jesus' message. (Heb. 2:1-4)
        - God punished those who did not obey the messages from angels. How much more will he punish those who don't listen to his son?

- Since Jesus was faithful over God’s house as a son – we must pay much closer attention to him and give him more glory and honor.
- We have a share in God’s house...
  - The writer reminds that we share in a heavenly calling with Jesus in verse 1.
    - *Hebrews 3:1a – Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling...*
    - The writer has already showed that we share in flesh and blood with Jesus (Heb. 2:14).
  - The calling that we share is seen in verse 6.
    - *Hebrews 3:6 - but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house...*
    - Just as Moses and Jesus were a part of God’s house, we also are a part of God’s house.
- ...IF???
  - The writer uses the word “IF”, because there is a possibility of a different outcome.
    - *Hebrews 3:6b - And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*
      - What is implied is that if we don’t do that, then we are not God’s house.
    - *Hebrews 3:14 - For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*
      - But, if we don’t, then we will not share in Christ.
    - God has called us to share in his house, but we must meet his specifications.
  - By using the word “IF”, the writer is warning these Christians that they CAN lose out on their place in God’s house. That they can lose their share in Christ.
    - In fact, in verse 12, the writer will say to take care that your evil, unbelieving heart does not lead you to fall away from the living God.
    - The writer will say this again in chapter 6 when he describes someone who has tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the Holy Spirit, and then falls away.
    - The apostle Peter gives a similar message when he describes someone who escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of Jesus, but they became entangled in sin again. He describes them as a dog returning to its vomit.
  - By thinking that Christians cannot fall away, we are pulling the teeth out of the Hebrew writer’s argument, when he says “We are God’s house, if...”
- ...IF we remain faithful.
  - In verses 1-6, the writer highlighted the faithfulness of Moses and Jesus in God’s house.
    - Since, we are God’s house, we must also remain faithful.
    - Throughout the rest of chapters 3 and 4, the writer describes faithfulness in God’s house.
  - The first description is to hold fast our confidence and boasting in our hope (Heb. 3:6)
    - The idea is repeated in verse 14.



- *Hebrews 3:14 - For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*
- Acting on our confidence is a common encouragement in Hebrews (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-23; 10:35-36; 13:6)
- Based on these verses, our confidence is based on our fellowship with God and having access to him.
- The writer also says to hold fast to our boasting in our hope.
  - Our hope is based on what God has promised to give us.
    - Therefore, we are being called to boast in God's promises.
    - We are NOT boasting in our strength or even our faith.
  - We are boasting in the Lord's strength and his faithfulness.
    - This is why we can hold fast to our confidence and boast in our hope – because our God will deliver.

### **Hebrews 3:7-11 – Quotation of Psalm 95:7-11**

- In verses 7-11, the writer quotes from Psalm 95:7-11.
- Psalm 95 is a Psalm of praise and warning by David.
  - In Psalm 95, the Psalmist encourages the reader/listener to praise God and enter into his presence (Psalm 95:1-7a)
    - Worship and bow down before Him because he is our Maker.
  - Then, the Psalmist warns the reader not to follow their fathers' example by hardening their hearts and testing the Lord.
    - For this warning, the Psalmist uses the story of Israel on their Exodus from Egypt.
    - Throughout their journey in the wilderness, Israel grumbled and complained and tested God along the way.
      - Examples given in the Psalm are Meribah and Massah (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13; Deuteronomy 6:16).
    - Their final act of rebellion was when they were brought to the front gate of the Promised Land, and they refused to go in – because they did not trust the Lord. (Numbers 13-14)
  - The Psalmist ends the warning with words from the Lord that give the conclusion of Israel's hardness of heart and rebellion – "Therefore I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" (Psalm 95:11)
    - The fathers were unable to enter God's rest – because of their rebellion.
    - That generation was led to wander in the wilderness until they all died.
- Additional Notes:
  - The Hebrew writer uses the Septuagint (aka Greek Old Testament or LXX) for this quotation.
    - "The rebellion" is the equivalent to "Meribah" in the Hebrew text.
    - "The testing" is the equivalent to "Massah" in the Hebrew text.

- The Hebrew writer attributes this Psalm to both the Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7) and to David (Heb. 4:7).

### Hebrews 3:12-19 – Take care to not make the same mistakes

- The Hebrew writer quotes Psalm 95:7-11 (and further exposit it between Hebrews 3:12-4:13), because he is making the same point as the Psalmist.
  - The writer warns his readers to take care to not follow the path that led Israel to provoke the Lord's anger.
  - By doing so, the Hebrew writer metaphorically connects the nation of Israel's story with his audience's story.
  - As Christians, we are also on an Exodus.
    - We have been given promises of God's presence with us.
    - We have also been given promises of being able to enter God's rest.
    - However, because we are on a similar journey, we also face similar dangers and pitfalls.
  - The Hebrew writer warns to not make the same mistakes that Israel did and expect different results.
    - Don't be disobedient to the Lord and still expect that you will be able to enter his rest.
- The Hebrew writer uses this Psalm as a contrast to his previous point in Hebrews 3:6.
  - In verse 6, Christians are called God's house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.
  - In Psalm 95, the contrast of Israel is stark.
    - On the Exodus, Israel did not hold fast to their confidence in the Lord's presence.
      - Instead, they grumbled, complained, and tested God all along the way.
    - In the wilderness, Israel did not boast in their hope.
      - Instead, they ignored God's faithfulness to keep his promises.
    - Throughout their journey, Israel did the opposite of remaining faithful to the Lord.
    - Therefore, Israel did not get to enter God's rest.
- In Hebrews 3:12-13, the Hebrew writer makes the point clear – Don't be hardened by sin and fall away.
  - *Hebrews 3:12-13 - Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
  - This warning should be striking to every Christian.
    - People who would call themselves "believers" can become unbelievers.
    - Christians, who have been promised by the Lord, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5), are also being told that they could fall away from the living God.

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- Christians, who have been given a “new heart and a new spirit” and have had their heart of stone removed (Ezekiel 36:26), are now being told that their hearts can be hardened.
    - “How does this happen?” we may ask. The writer answers “the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:13)
      - Sin is just as much a danger for the Christian as it was for the non-Christian.
        - This is why Jesus gives such strong language about sin in Matthew 18:5-9 and promotes such radical action as to tear out an eye that causes one to sin.
        - This is why Paul says that Christians must consider themselves “dead to sin” and to not let sin “reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.” (Rom. 6:11-12)
      - Sin has the same consequences that were explained in the garden to Adam – death and separation from God. (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24)
  - In Hebrews 3:13, the writer exhorts his readers to exhort one another every day.
    - Christians are not alone on our Exodus journey.
      - “WE are his house” (Heb. 3:6)
      - We are all walking together.
    - Therefore, we need to be good teammates for each other.
      - We need to help one another and encourage one another.
      - Again, this mentality is highlighted by Jesus in Matthew 18:10-20.
        - “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault...If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” (Matt. 18:15)
    - When we have the correct view of sin and its danger, then we will quickly exhort a brother (and fellow traveler) to flee from sin.
      - We will gladly snatch a brother or sister from out of the fire (Jude 22-23).
  - In verses 16-19, the Hebrew writer explains that sin and a hardened heart is what kept that generation of Israelites from entering into God’s rest.
    - Verses 16-17 – they heard the voice of God, yet they rebelled and provoked the Lord.
    - Verse 17 – they sinned and therefore died in the wilderness.
    - Verses 18-19 – they were disobedient and did not believe, therefore, God did not let them enter his rest.
      - Repeated again in Hebrews 4:6.
    - Sin, disobedience, and rebellion kept Israel from entering God’s rest.
  - Even though we follow a greater leader (Jesus is greater than Moses) through our wilderness journey, we are still in danger of falling away and not entering God’s rest because of sin.

### **Hebrews 4:1-10 – The promise of entering God’s rest remains**

- *Hebrews 4:1a – “Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands...”*

- The promise of rest was not just for the Jews during the Exodus. It was also not just for the Jews reading David's Psalm.
- The writer explains that Christians have also been promised a rest by God, and that the promise still stands.
  - *Hebrews 4:6a* – “*Since therefore it remains for some to enter [the rest]...*”
  - *Hebrews 4:9* – “*So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,*”
- Now in verses 1-3, the writer explains how to enter God's rest:
  - Fear the Lord
    - *Hebrews 4:1* - *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*
    - Fearing the Lord is often connected with obeying his commands.
      - *Deuteronomy 5:29* - *Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!*
      - Other examples: Deuteronomy 6:2; 8:6; 10:12; 13:4...
    - Fearing the Lord is also connected with esteeming God's name and serving him. (Malachi 3:16-18).
      - This attitude leads to humility while exalting the Lord.
    - It's also clear that the generation in the wilderness did not fear the Lord, which is why they missed out on his rest.
  - Listen to God's word
    - *Hebrews 4:2* - *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*
    - In this verse, listening to God's message is different than hearing God's message.
      - The people in the wilderness heard God's word, yet they rebelled. (Heb. 3:16)
      - They literally heard His voice at Sinai, but it clearly did not benefit them because they were kept from entering God's rest.
    - Therefore, we must hear (or listen to) the word differently. This leads to the next point.
  - Believe / Faith
    - *Hebrews 4:3a* - *For we who have believed enter that rest...*
    - In order to listen to God's word (and not simply hear it), we must believe it. We must have faith in the God speaking to us.
      - This point connects with earlier exhortations to hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Heb. 3:6)
    - The wilderness generation did not believe in God, which led them to fall away.
    - When we believe in God, then we will remain faithful to him; and we will enter His rest.
- When can I enter God's rest?

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- *Hebrews 4:6-7 - Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*
  - The writer also explains that "Today" is the day appointed to enter God's rest.
    - This means that it is not speaking of a future rest.
    - This is a rest that people of God can enter now.
    - Verse 10 refers to people who have already entered – *"whoever has entered God's rest..."*
  - What is God's rest?
    - It is not simply the Promised Land
      - *Hebrews 4:8 - For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.*
      - The generation in the wilderness who rebelled against the Lord did not enter God's rest because of their hardened hearts.
      - However, the Hebrew writer explains that the next generation who entered Canaan led by Joshua also did not receive rest.
        - Therefore, Israel entered the land without entering the rest.
        - In fact, the Psalmist is also proving this fact because the people he encourages to enter God's rest are already living in Canaan.
      - Therefore, God's rest must be more than simply a physical location – a land flowing with milk and honey.
    - It is a Sabbath rest (resting from work)
      - *Hebrews 4:9-10 - So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.*
      - In verses 3-4, the writer references God resting on the seventh day from all his works (Genesis 2:1-3).
      - Now, in verses 9-10, the writer says that the people of God can enter that same rest and rest from our works "as God did from his."
      - I suggest that resting from our work does not mean laying down all our tools to start a pleasurable retirement.
        - The rest from our work is more about our viewpoint than relaxation.
        - God's rest means we will feel peaceful.
        - We will not be anxious but instead be confident in the One who provides.
        - In God's rest, even the fear of death disappears.
        - This new viewpoint we receive when we enter God's rest will affect every part of our lives – including a greater fullness of worship.
    - As you have seen, the writer gives very few details about God's rest.
      - It is described as something that is both worth striving towards and heart-breaking to miss.
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- To have a better understanding of God’s rest, we will need to look to the rest of Scripture.
- See Appendix: God’s Rest for more information.

### Hebrews 4:11-13 – Strive to enter God’s rest by obeying His word

- Because the promise of God’s rest still remains...we must strive to enter it. (Heb. 4:11)
  - This striving will keep us from falling by the same disobedience that the wilderness generation fell by.
  - Striving implies activity on my part.
- What is the striving that I must do?
  - The writer has hinted at it throughout:
    - *Hebrews 3:7b-8a – “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart as in the rebellion...”*
    - *Hebrews 4:2 - For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*
    - *Hebrews 4:6 - Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,*
  - Striving to enter God’s rest requires me to hear (listen to), believe, and obey God’s word.
    - Why? Because it will keep my heart from becoming hardened.
  - Notice how the writer describes God’s word:
    - *Hebrews 4:12-13 - For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
      - The word of God can pierce the hardness of my heart.
      - It can cut through the recesses of my soul that I protect and keep hidden to expose the lies I hold onto to His truth.
      - God’s word refines my heart.
      - It is a mirror which reveals my flaws.
      - His good news will keep me from falling into disobedience.
  - Listening to and obeying God’s word is the key to entering His rest.

### Appendix: God’s Rest

In Scripture, God’s rest includes (but is not limited to):

- God resting on the seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3)
- No gathering manna on the seventh day (Ex. 16:23-26)

- The Sabbath day (Ex. 20:8-11)
- The Sabbath year (Ex. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7)
- The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-22)
- The Promised Land (Deut. 12:9-11; 25:19; Josh 1:13...)
- Zion (Psalm 132:8,13-14)
- Taking Jesus' yoke (Matt. 11:28-30)
- Being given to those who die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13)

For a good synopsis of how many of these ideas are connected, I recommend David McClister's essay "The Promise of a Sabbath Rest."

For the sake of brevity, I propose the following as a short summary of God's rest:

The promise of entering God's rest is an offer for mankind to have fellowship with the Lord. The first picture of this fellowship and rest is Adam and Eve's relationship with God in the garden. God abundantly provided everything. Man's work was fruitful. Food was plentiful. Safety and security were unquestioned. Death was unimagined. Their life is described beautifully as naked and not ashamed while the Lord God would walk with them in the garden.

Of course, that fellowship was destroyed because of sin. The relationship was broken, and they were sent out of the garden. The curses for sin changed everything. Work was now burdensome. Food was now difficult to acquire. Safety and security were out of reach. Pain was now expected. Death was certain.

Yet, throughout the Bible story, God is working to bring man back into fellowship with Him (into His rest). This can be seen in God's covenant relationship with Israel. With this covenant relationship, God promised to abundantly provide everything again. In the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-14, the Lord offered a glimpse of his relationship with Adam in the garden, even in a cursed world: a dwelling place, fruitfulness galore, food in abundance, and safety and security from their enemies. All of this would be their reality if they faithfully obeyed the voice of the Lord. However, another part of the covenant is that the Lord calls Israel to join Him in a Sabbath rest. With the Sabbath, Israel is able to pause from their daily work of gathering food, so that they can fellowship (or commune) with God in worship. Unfortunately, like Adam, Israel never fully realized the blessings that come from God's rest and fellowship but instead received the curses for disobedience (Deut. 28:15-68).

Yet, the promise of entering God's rest still remains for us today. Jesus says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30). So, what is God's rest for Christians today? What is the rest that the Hebrew writer is calling his readers to enter?

The preceding pictures of fellowship with God (Adam and Israel) give us a better idea of what is meant by God's rest throughout Scripture (but especially in Hebrews). This rest is not lounging around in our pajamas or sitting on the beach. This rest does not even mean that we will no longer work. Instead entering God's rest opens our eyes to greater spiritual realities. We are no longer anxious because we recognize God provides for all our needs (Matt. 6:25-34). We are no longer fearful because we know our enemies (including Satan, sin, and death) have no power over us anymore because they have already been defeated. Now, we feel safe and secure. We have peace.

With this clearer vision, even our work in a cursed world brings satisfaction. Likewise, the Sabbath rest brings us into union and fellowship with God and leads us to worship.

However, do not be mistaken thinking the Sabbath under the old covenant is an exact picture of the Sabbath rest that remains for Christians in Hebrews 4:9. The Sabbath for Israel is a shadow of the rest we are promised with Jesus in his house. God's rest that we strive for is not a day off work so we can go to worship. It is greater and more all-encompassing than that. Our worship is not confined to one day a week, instead it permeates every day of our life. Our fellowship is not defined by coming to God's dwelling in the temple. We are his house. We are the temple. Our fellowship with God penetrates every part of our being.

Jesus describes our fellowship with him when he says that we can abide in him, and he and his Father will abide in us (John 6:56; John 15:4-11; John 17:20-26). Later, Paul will include the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16). In Ephesians, Paul says that Christians are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22) and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17). John says we can have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, when we walk in the light with them (1 John 1:3-7).

Because of this fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, we can enter into God's rest "Today". But, our fellowship and rest with God right now on this earth is just the beginning. We will still be living in a cursed world. Our rest will be more fully complete and perfect when we come to the new garden scene (this time, in Revelation). The curses from sin will be lifted. We will again be unashamed. We will again be surrounded by fruitfulness. We will be called to rest from our labors (Rev. 14:13). And we will walk with the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

Therefore, to enter God's rest, we need to fully trust in Him to provide everything we need. We need to trust that he has our best interests in mind. We cannot grumble or test him as the wilderness generation did. We cannot let sin deceive us and harden our hearts. Instead, we need to "faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments..." (Deut. 28:1). When we do, then we will enter God's rest.

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## **We Have Such a High Priest**

*Joe Works*

**Text:** Hebrews 4:14-8:3

### **Why study the Priesthood of Jesus?**

Too often, from a modern Christian perspective, a study of the priesthood amounts to studying the book of Hebrews and merely drawing the conclusion that Jesus is superior to the religious rites and regulations of the Old Testament. The conclusion is reached that Jesus is superior, or as the Hebrew writer states, “better” (7:22; 8:6; 9:23; 12:24), and there the study ceases. Or the claim is carelessly made that the Old Testament is physical, and the New Testament is spiritual. Are these the conclusions the Hebrew writer wanted us to reach? Could it be that the assertion of the “betterness” of Jesus is intended to point us to a deeper conclusion?

Our Hebrew text is specifically concerned with the validation of the priesthood of Jesus through the resurrection. Or, in other words, how the raising up of Jesus proved that He is our High Priest forever (1:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 25, 7:28; 13:8).

If/since Jesus is proven to be an eternal High Priest, then He is the One to whom we must go in order to find access to the Father. Most of us have long ago accepted that Jesus is the Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14), but carefully studying the priesthood aspect of the Bible will give us a greater appreciation of what it means to come to this Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14).

Thus, if we are to appreciate God’s word in its fulness; we must see “priesthood” as more than just a part of Israelite worship. We must see the priesthood of Jesus as more than just a better priesthood. We must see Jesus as more than simply a better Aaron. We must see the priesthood as God sees it. A tall task to be sure, but one that will draw us closer to the One who “intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:34).

Put another way, a study of the priesthood fails to find its true value if we only view it from the vantage point of a Jewish Christian’s argument for the superiority of Jesus. Jesus is superior to all things Old Testament, but He is more than just that. Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of all that God’s holiness required in order for Him to have communion with man.

### **A brief overview of Priests**

There were priests before Aaron. Mostly famously, there was Melchizedek (Gen. 14). There were priests in the land of Egypt at the time of the patriarchs (Gen. 47). Joseph married into one of those priestly families (Gen. 41). Moses’ father-in-law was a priest in Midian (Exod. 2). Moses himself functioned as a priest at the ordination of Aaron (Lev. 8-10), and he is identified as a priest in Psalm 99:6. A list of other significant priests would include Jeremiah (1:1); Ezekiel (1:3); Ezra (7:1-5).

Spiritual people have long accepted that man needs a priest, a mediator, one who can approach God on behalf of those who have become a reproach to God. That is exactly what the priesthood is concerned with: bringing people into fellowship with God. The work of a priesthood has been likened to that of a civil engineer, a bridge-builder, creating a link between two otherwise “unconnectable” objects.

Sin has created a gulf between man and his God. Man is impure. God is holy. They can abide

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together no more than darkness and light. The purpose of the priesthood is to provide the structure whereby man may enter into the presence of God, with hope, instead of with terror.

Outside a relationship with God, all that we do is for naught. Without a capable priesthood, all efforts to approach God are for naught also. The function of the priesthood is central to man's relationship to God, which is the very purpose of life itself. Concerning the Levitical priesthood, Baruch Levine says, "The sanctity of the priesthood itself was indispensable to the fulfillment of Israel's mandate to become a holy nation." (XV).

## **The weakness of the Aaronic Priesthood**

It was certainly Jehovah's desire that the Israelite nation have the blessing of being a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exod. 19:6). He gave them clear conditions for becoming and remaining such a "special people" in the previous verse, "if you indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, ..." (v. 5).

God so loved them that He gave them a special priesthood, a tribe of priests who were to serve God on behalf of the nation. This priesthood tribe was to come before Jehovah on behalf of a sinful nation and provide atonement for their sins.

But a priesthood is only as good as its priests. There was an obvious deficiency in the holiness of Aaron, Eleazar, Phinehas, and every priest who followed in that family. They all died (Heb. 7:23). Death came upon them and conquered them because they, like those they sought to minister for, sinned. Therefore, under the Levitical priesthood, man was still unable to truly stand in the presence of God.

Their sins were never so pronounced as on the day of Atonement, "... make atonement for himself ..." (Lev. 16:6, 11, 17, 24). Or again, "Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." (Heb. 5:3). The Hebrew writer uses this event to teach that the way to God was not yet perfected (Heb. 9:6-8).

And so goes the history of man. He is unable to gain access into the presence of God neither by his merit nor that of others (priests).

## **The Priesthood and the veil**

In love and mercy God dwelt in the midst of the congregation of Israel. In holiness and righteousness Jehovah resided in the Most Holy Place, separated from the people by the tabernacle. In order to approach God, one needed to pass the altar of burnt offerings, the wash basin, and the Holy Place (with its articles). Each item had its spiritual significance for the Israelites and a foreshadowing lesson for us.

The Most Holy Place was screened off from the rest by a veil (Exod. 26:33). The presence of the veil showed that access to God was unattainable. Only once a year was anyone allowed to enter into presence of God. Even then there was a reminder that access to God was not fully realized. Before entering beyond the veil, the high priest had to burn incense in order to cover the area with smoke, thus preventing him from seeing the glory of the LORD and being killed (Lev. 16:1-13). After this he would offer sacrifices for himself and then for the nation.

Levine describes the entering beyond the veil in this way, “In the ritual of Yom Kippur, the High Priest drew extremely close to God’s throne in the Holy of Holies and was therefore in danger – even though he had committed no wrongdoing and was in the Holy of Holies in accordance with God’s instructions. ... all who stand in God’s presence are in need of expiation in order to avert His wrath.” (104).

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest went beyond the veil (Lev. 16:15), but when the day turned to night, the veil still stood. God was beyond the reach of the hands of sinful man.

## Looking forward to Melchizedek

David foretold of an old/new priesthood (Ps. 110:1-4): a post-Aaronic priesthood based on a pre-Aaronic priest. How impressive are the Scriptures that a rather unassuming event, briefly told in three simple verses (Gen. 14:18-20), would be the standard for the redemption of all of mankind.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said:

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,  
 Possessor of heaven and earth;  
 And blessed be God Most High,  
 Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

And he gave him a tithe of all.

Melchizedek - even the name majestically proclaims his character and role, “king of righteousness” (Heb. 7:2). In addition to being king of Salem (peace), Melchizedek also was a priest: a priest of the “Most High God” (7:1).

- A priest of God Most High meets Abraham. How significant is this description? In the same context, Abraham refuses the offer of the king of Sodom based on his oath to the “God Most High” (Gen. 14:21-22). Melchizedek was indeed a priest of God Most High, for he was chosen by God to serve (Heb. 5:5-6).
- A priest from the city, which will eventually be known as Jerusalem, blesses Abraham. Psalm 76:2 links Salem to the Holy City Jerusalem, “In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.” How fitting that the king of the earthly city of Peace would point to the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22) wherein dwells the great Mediator/Priest (12:24) and King (12:28).
- A priest, who is a king, receives tithes from Abraham. Elsewhere in this book the kingly role of Jesus is emphasized, but it is almost impossible to speak of one role (priest) without speaking of the other (king), or vice-versa.

Earlier, it was noted that God desired a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:5-6). Psalm 110 gives us the image of Priestly King, looking forward to Christ. Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 show us the blessed kingdom of priests who are made such by the King, Lion/Lamb (5:5) and Priest/Sacrifice, Redeemer (5:9). One of the most powerful scenes of this Priestly King is in Isaiah 6 where the throne is set up in the temple where sins are forgiven (6:1-7). Also, Zechariah 6:12-13, Psalm 11:4, and Hebrews 4:14-15 for this King/Priest imagery.

Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. The point is not to show Abraham as weak or bad. Truly Abraham was a great man. Hebrews 7:4 makes the emphasis, “even” Abraham gave to this priest. Through Abraham then Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek showing that the priesthood of Melchizedek is better than the priesthood of Levi (Heb. 7:4-10).

- Then there is the question of pedigree. In the nation of Israel, the tribe of Levi was chosen to serve the LORD. From that tribe God chose Aaron and his sons to be priests (Num. 3). The first high priest was Aaron. After Aaron’s death came Eleazar. After Eleazar died Phineas became high priest. The high priest always coming from Aaron’s family.

Melchizedek was chosen without regard for family lineage. “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of days” (Heb. 7:3) does not imply Melchizedek had no parents, but rather should be interpreted to mean that Melchizedek’s role is not the result of a human pedigree, as McClister (239) explains “It is the uninherited and uninheritable nature of Melchizedek’s priesthood that is in view, not the man himself.”

- Melchizedek came bringing bread and wine. The priest/king that foreshadows Jesus comes offering the faithful servant of God Abraham bread and wine. There is no New Testament passage that directly indicates that this detail was a type of the Lord’s Supper but consider the parallel to our Lord giving His body and blood so that His faithful servants could live. Reading Genesis 14 through the lens of the New Testament one can almost hear this Melchizedek saying, “Take, eat” and “Drink from it” (Matt. 26:26-27).
- Of all the Scriptural references concerning Melchizedek, the description of him as a “priest forever” stands out most boldly. The Melchizedek to come would be like the Genesis priest in that he would be a “priest forever”. As Kidner says, “The addition of *forever* is perhaps the most significant clause of all. It is this that clinches our assurance. It is a major theme of the Epistle of the Hebrews after its first appearance in Hebrew 5:6, where the eternal priest is shown to provide eternal salvation (5:9), in contrast to the ephemeral priests whose labours were manifestly inconclusive.” (430)

### “Made like the Son of God”

As the tabernacle on earth was a copy of the heavenly (Heb. 8:5), so too was the priesthood of Melchizedek a copy of the perfect priesthood in Jesus.

And note the argument is stronger than Jesus being made like Melchizedek. As Bruce (160) states it, “Melchizedek remains a priest continually for the duration of his appearance in the biblical narrative; but in the antitype Christ remains a priest continually without qualification. And it is not the type which determines the antitype, but the antitype which determines the type; Jesus is not portrayed after the pattern of Melchizedek, but Melchizedek is “made conformable to the Son of God.”

### Behind the veil

The tabernacle and all that was in it was a copy of heavenly things. The presence of God in the tabernacle was real, and yet, not complete. God is reigning from Heaven. The veil, that which separates man from God, has been rended by Jesus. Our Lord has passed into the exact presence of the Father and stands before Him as our High Priest (Heb. 8:1)

Jesus functions perfectly as High Priest on our behalf. His priesthood has accomplished what no other could. He ministers as mediator for us, proclaiming our sins purged. Purged, not because of our deeds nor because of an animal substitute, but because of His perfect sacrifice (Heb. 9:14). It was for this purpose that Christ came to the earth, to redeem man from his sinful state (I Pet. 1:18-20). In this way, God shows mankind His perfect balance of righteousness and mercy. Jesus was, simultaneously, the High Priest performing the offering and the perfect offering being sacrificed.

And so, because Jesus placed Himself on the cross, sanctifying those “children whom God has given Me” (Heb. 2:13), God therefore heard His cries of suffering. God responded to His godly fear (Heb. 5:7) and manifested to the world that Jesus is indeed the High Priest forever by raising Him from the dead. The Hebrew author emphasizes that it was the Father who raised Him and in so doing glorified the Christ. This, says the author, is the time in which God called Him to be High Priest, at His resurrection (Heb. 5:5-11). Paul’s sermon in Antioch emphasizes God’s raising up of Jesus as proof that everyone must come to “this Man” to receive forgiveness of sins justification, things not offered through the law of Moses (Acts 13:30-39).

Death prevented the priests of the Israelite nation (and every other nation) from continuing, but by the resurrection, God proclaimed Jesus to be High Priest forever. It is fitting for One who has the “power of an endless life” to be the hope of life eternal. John 17:3 says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Jesus is the “better hope, through which we draw near to God.” (Heb. 7:19).

## Conclusion

What are we to do with this understanding of Jesus as our High Priest forever? As stated earlier, He is superior to all things Levitical, indeed our Lord is better than anything anywhere. But what lesson are we to gain from seeing Jesus as High Priest?

We see “such a High Priest” (7:26; 8:1) who is sympathetic (4:15), compassionate (5:2), perfected (5:9), unchangeable (7:24), holy, innocent, undefiled, separate (7:26), and seated at the right hand of God (8:1).

Jesus, as our great, merciful, and faithful, High Priest, becomes our only reasonable Mediator. If we fail to remain firm in our commitment to the only One who can bring us salvation then we have lived in vain.

The Hebrew writer opens and closes his book with the same admonition.

“how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,” (Heb. 2:3)

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,” (Heb. 12:25)

William L. Lane succinctly describes the theme of Hebrews in this way, “The redemptive accomplishment and transcendent dignity of the Son through whom God has spoken the final word demonstrates that it will be catastrophic to ignore the word of salvation delivered through the Son (2:1-4) (cxxii).

Day by day, as we see ourselves in desperate need of God's mercy we should be prepared to turn to Jesus. Since He was tempted and yet remained a sinless High Priest, He is the One to whom we must go when we are tempted. Since Jesus made propitiation for our sins (Heb. 2:17-18) we must endlessly and firmly hold to the confidence of our relationship and hope (Heb. 3:6, 14; 4:14-16; 6:11-12; 6:18; 7:25; 9:28; 10:19-25; 10:39; ch. 11).

## Related Observations

### A Tale of Two Cities

Genesis 14:17-24

An interesting contrast appears in this text where two very different cities are represented. The king of Sodom comes out to greet Abraham. Before his offer of reward is extended to Abraham, Melchizedek appears. Melchizedek blesses Abraham and praises God Most High. Abraham honors Melchizedek's priesthood by giving a tithe.

The Sodomite king is then heard, "give me the souls, and take the goods for yourself." Wisely, Abraham refuses to put himself in a position to have someone else claim he made Abraham rich.

Ignoring the chapter break, Jehovah is the next to speak (15:1ff). God promises Abraham, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." (NASB).

Summing up the story: Abraham meets the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. One offers him a spiritual blessing and the other one offers material riches. Abraham chooses the better. God then promises Him protection and a great reward. "And Abraham believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (15:6).

Our application: With Genesis 15:6 in mind Paul says, "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." (Gal. 3:7). The ruler of this world will offer us what is not lasting. Let us look for the blessing from the New Testament Melchizedek instead. Then God will indeed be our defender and reward!

### "Are you seeking the priesthood also?"

Numbers 16:10

The story of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram serves as a good comparison (perhaps foreshadowing) of the rejection of Jesus by the Israelite leaders. Dathan and Abiram, both from the tribe of Reuben, seem to be opposing Moses and his leadership (16:12-15). Korah, a Levite, from the same clan as Aaron, Kohath, challenges Aaron's priesthood (16:8-11).

These men were destroyed by the LORD, but on the next day the congregation rebelled against Moses and Aaron to such a point that God brought a plague on the congregation. Aaron had to make atonement for the rebels so that God's wrath would be diverted (Num. 16:41-50).

God, wanting to clearly show the congregation whom He had chosen to be priests, had 12 rods laid in the tabernacle. The next morning Aaron's rod sprouted, budded, blossomed, and brought forth ripe almonds. God made a dead stick come back to life. God manifested His approval of Aaron as Israel's high priest.

Days before the crucifixion, Jesus entered Jerusalem and faced the rejection of the leaders of His day (Matt. 21:15, 23, 45; 22:15, 23, 34-35; 26:3). They too challenged God's Anointed. The crowd joined in (Matt. 27:20-23). Our Lord was killed. Jesus was laid in the tomb. Three days later God manifested His approval of Jesus as the Great High Priest forever. Like Aaron's rod, God chose to bring back to life that which would prove the One chosen!

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# The Better in Christ's Priesthood, Covenant, and Sacrifice

*David Kippe*

**Text:** Hebrews 8:4-10:18

## I. Introduction: Better

- The term "better" (Strong's G2909: kreittōn, meaning superior or more excellent appears 13 times in Hebrews, underscoring the letter's core message.
- This theme, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reflects God's determination of what is superior—not the writer's opinion—culminating in Hebrews 8-10 as what could be referred to as the doctrinal or theological crescendo of the letter.
- Jesus has been presented as better than angels, Moses, Joshua, and the Levitical High Priest. The writer builds upon the last one in this section as we see his work as the better High Priest with a better ministry, covenant, promises, and sacrifice.
- Hebrews 8:4-10:18 serves as the central exposition, following the introduction of Jesus as High Priest (chapters 4-7) and preceding practical applications (chapters 11-13), with 10:11-18 as the capstone of Christ's finished better work.
- The writer presents what is found in the old law as "copies and shadows of the good things to come." Those good things can simply be stated as better. They cannot be surpassed as they are the substance of the shadow.
- The purpose of this study is to understand the better work which has been done on our behalf so we can be joined in fellowship with God once and for all, and that our response should always be better, once and for all.

*Note: All scriptures quoted are from the English Standard Version unless noted*

## II. Hebrews 8:4-13: The Better Ministry and Covenant Introduced

### A. Jesus' Distinct Priesthood (8:4-5)

1. That Jesus, unlike Levitical priests, could not serve on earth (from Judah, not Levi) but ministers in the true heavenly sanctuary.
  - a) "Now if he were on earth, he would not be priest at all"
    - (1) The previous section made clear that Jesus was now seated at the right hand of God (8:1, Ps110:1-4). The writer will return to this at the end of our lesson.
    - (2) The writer made it clear that Jesus as a priest being present in this physical world would be a problem for us (7:12-14). He couldn't do the work of a priest due to not being from the line of Levi.

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- (3) This creates a problem for Premillennialists who say Jesus will have an earthly reign as king. Jesus is priest and king, he would not be able to do his priestly duties on Earth. Jesus' reign and ministry is not earthly in nature.
  - (4) God is not an author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33). God does not break the laws in which he sets. He binds himself by them. This appeals to Him being just. Jesus could never serve on earth due to what was written within the law He gave.
    - (a) This sets up what comes later in this chapter and section. If God is bound by his own law, the law would have to change.
- b) "since there are priests who offer..."
- (1) The writer's use of the present tense use of *prospheerō* indicates that the priests were still performing the ritualistic sacrifices at the temple. This is helpful in dating the letter prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. If written after, even if the old law was still in effect, it would not be lawful to be offering up sacrifices upon an altar and in a place that God had not allowed for. (cf Jos 8:30-31, 2 Sam 29:18-19).
    - (a) Modern Jews do not offer up animal sacrifices, today. Even the more conservative sects (Hasidic) do not. Some do teach that if a temple is ever rebuilt in Jerusalem, that the sacrifices will restart. *jewfaq*
2. Priests, who were of the lineage of Levi, were serving in that which was a "copy" (Strong's G5262: *hupodeigma*, a figure or representation) and "shadow" (Strong's G4639: *skia*, a dim outline) of heavenly things, as shown to Moses (Ex 25:9, 40). vs5
- a) We have our first look at a words the writer will repeat a few times; copy and shadow (8:5, 9:23, 9:24, 10:1)
    - (1) Copy: this isn't the real thing. It is an imitation. It suggests that there is something greater that exists before it.
    - (2) Shadow: "a reflection, a phantom, a silhouette" (William Barclay). A shadow, like a copy, cannot exist unless something substantially proceeds with it. A shadow also doesn't provide as much as the reality of something. Milligan adds that shadow is meant to "intensify the thought; thus indicating that the given representation was wholly destitute of the substance which is inherent in the heavenly realities."
      - (a) Illustration: A tree produces shade on a hot sunny day. The shadow serves a purpose to provide a covering to one who is sweating. But this is only temporary. However, the tree itself produces oxygen, fruit for nourishment and hydration. And the wood from it can provide a more permanent dwelling and protection from the elements. It becomes clear that the tree itself is better, even though the shadow from it served a purpose.
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(3) The Mosaic Law is merely a pattern. It is just an outline or shadow of a greater reality (Col 2:16-17). All these things were pointing forward to Jesus and his kingly priesthood

(a) This begs the question: Why would anyone want to return to, or continue to serve in what is inferior?

b) “Of the heavenly things”

(1) This is the better reality which Jesus is serving in. The covenant in which Jesus is High Priest to is the substance of the copies and shadows. What a blessing to live in a day and age of the fulfillment of all things.

c) “For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying....”

(1) To leave no doubt in the mind of the reader, the writer goes on to quote from Ex 25:40 to confirm what Moses had built was just a copy and a shadow of the reality. The passage quotes the term “pattern.” This naturally infers a copy. The tent, or tabernacle, was in fact a structure that was a copy of something heavenly originally shown to Moses, the law giver, at Sinai. But not just the tent itself, everything contained within it. The writer will go into greater detail in chapter 9 with his tour of the tabernacle. God’s heavenly sanctuary already existed.

(a) Moses did not deviate from God’s instructions to “make everything according to the pattern shown.” He did not add to or take away. This principle remains for those under the new covenant. We are given instructions about all types of relationships (marriage, brethren, work, government), and we follow the pattern expressed to the 1st century Christians. Our circumstances, culture, or change in man made laws do not excuse us from following the pattern. We do not determine what is better. God has already done that with the establishment of Jesus’ better priesthood and covenant.

- **Better Theme:** Jesus’ priesthood operates in the better and authentic, heavenly sanctuary, superior to the earthly copy, existing before and beyond the old covenant’s shadows (cf. Rev 4-8).

## **B. A Better Ministry, Covenant, and Promises (8:6-7)**

1. Christ’s ministry is better (*kreittōn*) because He mediates a **better** covenant with better promises. **Better** is emphasized twice in 8:6.

a) “But as it is”

(1) Beginning of contrast to the priests mentioned previously

b) “Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry than the old”

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- (1) Ch 9 will go into greater detail as to why this is greater ministry: it has the better sacrifice (9:23), More excellent can also be understood as a different kind or surpassing. Or another word: **better**.
- c) “as the covenant he mediates is **better**, since it is enacted on **better** promises”
- (1) Like Moses *was* (Gal 3:19), Christ *now is* the mediator, the intercessor, and the debt payer between the people and God to bring them together. There is no other mediator (1 Tim 2:4-6; John 14:6, Acts 4:12) and there never will be.
- (2) The better covenant is the new covenant (8:8,9:15), the second(8:7). These are words which can be used interchangeably. To enact is to put a new law into place. The new covenant is a new law. It is in place “it is enacted.” It was not something to come, it was already in place (ch 9:15-17), implying that the old was no longer valid.
- (3) On better promises: see notes for vs 8-12.
2. The first (Mosaic) covenant was faulty (Heb 7:11), not because God failed in his giving or his execution of it, but because it couldn't, by its very design, perfect humanity (cf. Rom 7:12; Gal 3:19, 24)—it was to be a tutor (NKJV) revealing sin and God's holiness and pointing others to Christ. “First” and “old” are also interchangeable.
- a) The first covenant is associated with tabernacle worship and Levitical priests. The writer will expand upon this in ch 9:1-10.
- b) There were other covenants prior to the Mosaic law. The covenants were made with Noah (Gen 9) and Abraham (Gen 12, 15, 17). But it clear due to the context of the section that it is referred to as the first because it was the first one made with Israel as a people.
- c) While the old law had fault, we should not think that the first law was not good and not perfect for its purpose. It did exactly what it was supposed to do. But as we will see in the following verses and later, it was not God's plan to be the final covenant he made with his people.
- **Better Theme:** The new covenant is better than the old, with better promises (developed more in 8:8-12, 9:12-13; 10:1-4), a reality the first could not achieve.

### C. The Prophecy of a Better Covenant (8:8-12)

1. “For he finds fault with them”v8a
- a) This is not saying something different than before. The fault in the law lay within the people and their sin. Humanity had an inability to "continue" (Strong's G1696: emmenō, to abide or maintain) in faithfulness (8:9), necessitating a new covenant.

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2. We are now introduced to the longest Old Testament text in the New Testament, as the writer quotes from Jer 31:31-34
    - a) Historical placement: the prophet Jeremiah recorded these words as the southern kingdom of Judah was entering into Babylonian captivity. He spoke about both Israel and Judah returning from their captivities but that they were receive a new covenant because the first law was unable to accomplish what was needed to be done.
  
  3. “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord...”v8b
    - a) The days here spoken of are 600 years in the future, when Jesus died on the cross. He assures us of this because he finishes the sentence by stating that establish a new covenant with Judah and Israel. The coming days are the “good things to come” spoken of in ch 9:11-14.
      - (1) The word “establish” should be understood as bringing something to accomplishment. Another way is looking at a promise being fulfilled or being made complete. Abraham was promised that “in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The nation is not only going to be reunited under one covenant, but we can see elsewhere in the both the old and new testament that both Jews and Gentiles are under the new covenant (i.e Is 11:11-16, Rom 15:8-13, Eph 2:11ff)
        - (a) This scripture here is often used as part of a millennium rule at the end of time. Judah and Israel being united physically into the kingdom of Israel and then Jesus ruling for 1000 years. But this would contradict vs6 which states Jesus is already mediating the new covenant. It also would claim that Jesus (God) failed to set up his kingdom.
  
  4. “Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers. . .” vs9a
    - a) This helps to confirm that his is most assuredly is speaking of the Mosaic covenant due to the mention of leading them out by the hand out of Egypt
      - (1) Ch 9:15-22 will speak more to the covenant made with Moses and the Israelites following their deliverance from Egypt (Ex 24:7-8)
  
  5. “For they did not continue in my covenant...” vs9b
    - a) Where God led them as a father by holding their hand, Israel responded like a disobedient child by pulling their hand away and doing what they wanted.
  
  6. “And so I showed no concern for them...”vs9c
    - a) They were not a respecter of God, so God was no longer tending to their needs. They took their inheritance from God and wasted it and he allowed them to (cf Lk 15:11-21)
  
  7. “For this is the covenant...” v10a. This is speaking of the new covenant from vv10-12. He will present four central promises that come with the new covenant.
    - a) I will put my law my law into their minds v10b
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- (1) Internal transformation: Laws in minds and hearts, not just external rules (8:10; cf. Mt 11:28-30). Why is this a better promise? Obedience is no longer seen as an obligation, but motivated by love for God because he has already loved them. (1 Jn 4:7-12)
- b) I will be their God, and they shall be my people v10c
- (1) Restored fellowship: God as "our God" and we as "His people" (8:10; cf. Hos 2:23). Direct access to him (8:11). While God made the same promise at Sinai, he rejected his people because they rejected him. This new covenant is better because all those who rejected him can now be his people.
- c) And they shall not teach, each on his neighbor... 'know the Lord... for they shall all know me.'
- (1) Personal knowledge of God: All in the covenant know Him intimately (8:11).
- (2) You had to be taught to know God in the first covenant. Everyone born was already a Jew. Males were dedicated on the 8th day following their birth to the Lord with their circumcision, but still did not know God.
- (3) This promise is better because EVERYONE, no matter who they were born, can enter into the covenant established by Jesus, and by doing so already know him. You cannot not know God and be part of the covenant.
- d) "For I will be merciful towards their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."
- (1) Forgiveness of sins: God remembers sins no more (8:12), the ultimate promise will be expanded upon later in chapter 9 and be hammered once again in chapter 10:11-14
- (2) This is clearly not just a better promise, but the greatest promise given and the foundation of all the others. The very purpose Jesus came to fulfill. Without forgiveness of sins, one does not know Jesus. One cannot have a restored relationship with God. One cannot have the law written on their hearts.
- **Better Theme:** The new covenant replaces the old with better promises, removing sin, removing the separation from the presence of God. It fulfills God's promise made in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:15). It isn't just better promises, it's the best and why there will never be another.

## D. The Old Covenant's Obsolescence (8:13)

1. "In speaking of a new covenant..."
  - a) The writer makes an application from the prophecy given by Jeremiah.

- b) As soon as Jeremiah indicated that a new covenant was being put in place, it immediately made the first one old, or as it is rendered here: obsolete.
- (1) The new renders the old "obsolete" (Strong's G3832: palaioumenon, growing old or worn out), vanishing with Christ's death (cf. Col 2:14).
- When did the old officially vanish away? The ultimate application is at the destruction of the temple in AD 70. However, it's stated in present tense because the prophecy was spoken by Jeremiah. It's in my opinion that the writer is saying this perspective from Jeremiah's vantage point. That said, once the temple was destroyed, there was no place for sacrifices and offerings to be made. This does not mean that they were effective post cross at any point. But the physical and ethnic manifestations of the law came to an end. Today, is no way to even know who is of true Jewish heritage. The records were destroyed when the temple was destroyed. Modern day Judaism is a vain and empty practice.
  - **Better Theme:** The old law, ineffective in removing sin, has given way to the better, permanent new covenant which does.
  - **Illustration:** Obsolete car parts fade away once replaced, just as the old covenant disappeared post-cross. You may have reproductions, but they are not what previously existed.

With the better new covenants firmly established over the old, the writer shifts in Hebrews 9:1-10 to contrast the tangible limitations and imperfections of the earthly tabernacle and with the transformative power of Christ's heavenly priesthood and sacrifice, deepening our understanding of what makes His work and sacrifice better.

### III. Hebrews 9:1-10: The Better Tabernacle and Sacrifice

#### A. The Old Covenant's Earthly Sanctuary (9:1-5)

1. The tabernacle, with its inferior "prepared" Holy Place and Most Holy Place, was an earthly shadow of heaven (9:1-4). The tabernacle and all that it contained were copies, the imitations of the heavenly things. They were shadows of a greater reality.
2. The writer now provides a limited tour of the earthly tabernacle, focusing on the furnishings within the Holy Place v2-3. Each of these items are a shadow of the good to come. We will include thoughts on the better, or the substance of these shadows.
  - a) **The Lampstand:** Provided light for the priests to do their duties. Jesus is the light of the world (Jn 8:12 and those who are in the new covenant are lights as well (Mt 5:14-16)
  - b) **The bread of the presence:** Only the priests could eat it (aka: the showbread NKJV). They would eat the old bread and put out new. It could only be eaten in the tabernacle. Jesus called himself the living bread (John 6:50-51) which was offered to the whole world to consume in order to live forever.



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3. The furnishings of the Most Holy Place v4

- a) The Altar of Incense:** It was located physically within the Holy Place, but its usage pertained to the Most Holy Place. This has been a point of scholarly debate in trying to eliminate an apparent mistake by the Hebrew writer's placement of this place of furniture.
- (1) Some have argued that it should be translated censor, McClister notes the secular Greek word thumiaterion was translated as such (p311) instead of altar of incense.
- (a) Some argue that the censor rendering is because the High Priest would use it on the Day of Atonement. This seems unlikely, as the censor would not reside in the Most Holy Place
- (2) The more natural understanding is that the smoke from the altar would fill the Most Holy Place when it was used, morning and evening. And especially on the Day of Atonement. "When the room was filled with smoke from the burning incense, the glory of God dwelt in the cloud of smoke (Lev 16:2,13) over the ark." (quoted McClister p311) The High Priest would perform this intercession on behalf of the people. This helps to understand that while the physical location was outside of the veil, its purpose was for the Most Holy Place. It pertained to the second section of the tabernacle.
- (a) Psalm 141:2 provides us a picture of the incense being burned as the intercession and representation of the people's prayers going to God (cf Rev 8:3-4).
- (b) Jesus is our intercessor through whom we have access to God and through whom we offer our prayers (Rom 8:34,1 Jn 2:1) to the father. We can boldly approach his throne (Heb 4:16), while only the High Priest could approach the Mercy Seat (the Ark of the Covenant) on the Day of Atonement.
- b) The Ark of the Covenant and its contents:** The only item(s) physically located within the Most Holy Place. The ark, when it was stationed in the tabernacle had: The golden urn holding the manna, Aaron's budded staff, and the tablets of stone. The ark was the most important piece of furniture in the entire tabernacle. The cover was called the mercy seat. This is where God met with his people, but only through the acts of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. The law was covered by the Mercy Seat which would be covered in blood on the Day of Atonement to provide atonement for sins for the entire Jewish nation including the High Priest. Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, the embodiment of it, and shed his own blood (was covered in it), so that the whole world would be forgiven of their sins. And he now sits on his throne which we can now approach.
- **Better Theme:** These temporary structures and items (all portable, all destructible) are copies of the heavenly tabernacle Christ entered (Heb 9:11).

## B. Limitations of the Old System (9:6-10)

1. Priests divine worship (LSB) was daily in the first section.
  - a) The first section here should be understood as the Holy Place. Vs 7 helps to confirm within this worship context.
  - b) Worship needs to be performed regularly (daily and weekly)
    - (1) Oil replaced for lampstand and trimmed the wicks, both day and night (Ex 30:7-8, Lev 23:3-4)
    - (2) Showbread replaced weekly (Lev 24:5-9)
    - (3) Incense burned on the alter twice a day (Ex 30:7)
  - c) “The repeated entrances and exits by the priests remind us of the author’s insistence that repetition is a sign of imperfection (see 1:1f and 7:23, 27)” - McClister p315
2. but only the high priest entered the Most Holy Place annually but not without blood for unintentional sins of his own and the people (9:6-7).
  - a) The daily rituals as described above were not in God’s presence, as God dwelled in the Most Holy Place. He was not accessible to the regular worshipper or even to his selected priests. Only the High Priest on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement (DoA), until his death. He would then be replaced. This again speaks to the perpetual need for atonement due to the imperfection within the work done.
    - (1) The High Priest could not enter into the Most Holy Place on the DoA without a sacrifice (a bull) for his own sins(Lev 16:4). He had to be purified in order to offer a sacrifice for the rest of the nation of Israel. Nobody can mediate on behalf of someone else if they themselves are guilty.
    - (2) “Unintentional sins” were the only sins addressed on the DoA. LSB, NASB, NKJV translate these as sins of the people “committed in ignorance.” This captures the nuance of these sins. It did not matter if you knew it was a sin or not when you committed it. One was still found guilty of sin and bared responsibility.
    - (3) Like the defective nature of the daily divine worship, the most important day of the year for those under the old law was not good enough, since it was an annual occurrence. It can be safely implied that as soon as the work on the DoA was done, there was already sin in the camp.
3. The tabernacle’s barriers showed no direct access to God (9:8-9), a "symbol" (Strong G3850: parabolē, parable) of a greater reality.
  - a) “By this the Holy Spirit indicates the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing” vs8

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- (1) The holy place in this context is heaven (9:24), because we just finished observing how one entered into the tabernacle.
  - (2) The first section here is speaking of the whole tabernacle (both sections) and not just the outer tent. As long as it still stood, God's plan for allowing all sinners to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (4:16) was still a mystery.
- b) "(which is symbolic for the present age)
- (1) As mentioned above, the term symbol can be translated as parable. The tabernacle was a teaching figure. It was meant to teach a greater spiritual truth, or greater spiritual reality. Just as the parable of the sower teaches us the greater reality of sharing the gospel with everyone, the tabernacle and its furnishings, and the worship contained within it, was teaching and looking forward to far greater reality. The present age, is the time the tabernacle stood.
- c) "According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper."
- (1) This statement seems to apply to the faithful under the old law. Those who were faithful to God understood something more was needed to be made complete.
    - (a) David's words in Ps 51 and Isaiah's in Is 6 speak to this idea
4. Sacrifices, food laws, and washings addressed external purity, not the conscience, until the "time of reformation" v10.
- a) Reformation is the noun form of the verb reform, meaning to put or change into an improved form or condition
  - b) McClister suggests "time of reformation" is better understood as revision or correction of the law, or the Lxx of Isaiah 16:5 which meant "establish" p322.
    - (1) The previous chapter (v6) and the proceeding verses makes it clear that this revision or improvement to the law is the age of the gospel or the time of the new covenant. We will see it referred to as "the good things that have come"

### **Supplementary Note on Instrumental Music:**

As mentioned in the text, the writer does not give us full details on the furnishings of tabernacle, "Of these things we cannot now speak in detail." I think it's appropriate to understand that it just not speaks of what is mentioned, but also what is not. There's no mention of the altar of sacrifice, no mention of the bronze laver, and not anything about the outer courtyard, although these are the things that Moses was clearly shown (Ex 25:40). Nor does he spend time discussing all aspects of tabernacle worship. He is simply providing a simple sketch, an outline, or as he says in vs 9, a parable, that brings the readers mind to the old covenant worship and how it had been done away with the arrival of the new covenant.

One very specific aspect of old covenant worship at the tabernacle and later within the temple that is not touched on is music. We can see clearly within the Mosaic law the use of mechanical instruments. Like all the furniture already mentioned, they were items with a specific purpose in a specific place when it came to offering worship to God. Trumpets (Num 10:1-10) and other instruments (1 Chron 25) were divinely ordained under the old covenant and were not man's innovation (1 Chron 28:19) although David provided the instruction in preparation for the temple worship. Yet, like all tabernacle elements, they were shadows of the reality. Shadows are clearly not better, as they lack the substance. In the New Testament, God specifies vocal, acapella praise (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), determining this as better—not because instruments are inherently inferior, but because God's will define worship's better form.

In other words, God determines better, not us. As an aside, this is an important principle we must hold fast to in our service to God. It should move us to not simply seek what it is that he has commanded us to do but transform our heart to always pursue better and not be content with where we are at. This is at the heart of hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

An argument often made individuals is that mechanical instruments would be better in our worship to God. And while it may be aesthetically pleasing to us and even incite an emotional response from us toward God, this cannot be confused with what God determines as better worship. While many will cite Old Testament passages in which they were used, often pointing to Psalms written by David, this was still part of first covenant worship (Mosaic covenant), the very inferior shadow to the substance the Hebrew writer say it is pointing to. It has been done away with, so we must look at the better instructions we have found in the New Covenant.

- **Better Theme:** The old system's furniture, the rituals, including the unmentioned practices within the text, such as instrumental music within worship, were all temporary, pointing to Christ's better, spiritual access and service to God.

### C. Christ's Better Priesthood and Sacrifice (9:11-14)

1. Jesus is described as the High Priest of the "good things that have come" The writer now speaks of Jesus' better service in the better tabernacle.
  - a) "But when Christ appeared": Jesus has come! (ch 4:14)
  - b) The phrase "the good things that have come" is the time of the reformation mentioned in vs 10. It also should be seen as the better promises that were described back in ch 8:6
    - (1) "good things" can also be understood as all blessings associated with the new covenant
2. entering not an earthly tabernacle "prepared" by human hands, but the greater and more perfect tent—that which is heavenly (cf. 9:24).

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- a) This tabernacle is better in two ways: it is not part of the created world, being unmade by human hands (cf. 8:2), and it allows Jesus to enter God's actual presence, not the symbolic one as the earthly high priest did. Unlike the Levitical high priest who entered the Most Holy Place yearly with the blood of bulls and goats (Lev 16:11, 15), Jesus entered once and for all with His own blood, securing eternal redemption. This "once and for all" sacrifice is timeless—valid until the end of time—unlike the repeated, temporary animal sacrifices. We will see later in vs15 the full timeless nature of Christ's blood.
3. Unlike animal blood (external cleansing, cf. Num 19), His unblemished (Strong's G299: *amōmos*, without defect) sacrifice through His spirit cleanses the conscience (9:13-14).
- a) The writer begins here an "if-then" argument to highlight Jesus' superior sacrifice. If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer (Num 19)—mixed with cedar, hyssop, and scarlet for external purification—could sanctify the flesh(vs13), then how much more does Christ's blood surpass it? Four aspects make His sacrifice better which are revealed in vs 14:
- (1) Offered Himself:** Jesus offered Himself voluntarily, not as an animal forced into sacrifice (John 10:17-18), a deliberate act of will unlike the passive deaths of animals.
- (2) Through the eternal spirit:** He offered Himself through His spirit a quality animals lacked, this emphasizes His active surrender, not just a physical death.
- (a) An oft-debated passage. Was this Jesus' personal divine spirit or the Holy Spirit. There are additional hypotheses, (as Milligan points out), but these two seem to be the most common. One of the main challenges often pointed to is that the original Greek manuscripts were all capital letters. It's nearly impossible to be dogmatic about this and we should avoid being so. My take is that it reads more naturally of his own spirit. But I would not insist upon this, and I am open to being reasonably persuaded. That said, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are inseparable (Acts 10:38). Whatever one's conclusion is, I do not think it changes what makes his sacrifice better. Be it His own spirit or the Holy Spirit, this was not something that animal sacrifices possessed. Jesus is always the better and is always doing better for His Father and for our benefit.
- (3) Without Blemish** (Strong's G299: *amōmos*, without defect): Unlike animals, whose perfection was strictly physical, Jesus' was moral—sinless perfection (1 Pet 1:19)—making His sacrifice infinitely better. One can also point to the idea of physical perfection. Though Jesus hung from the cross with a beaten and bloodied body due to the punishment He received prior, He did not have a broken bone, which is almost incredible to consider with what it was He suffered at the hands of the Roman guards. This was a fulfillment of prophecy as He was the better Passover lamb (Ps 34:20, Jn 19:31-37)
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- (4) **To God:** His sacrifice was better because it addressed the mind of God, cleansing our conscience, not just the flesh, while enabling us to serve the living God as living sacrifices and being part of a royal priesthood. The blood of Jesus has transforming power. Making us look more like him (Rom 12:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9-10).
- After reading this section it's hard to grasp that there were people who would rather go through the ritualistic cleansing that failed to clean the conscience. Vs 11-14 provide incredible security to those who believe in Christ.
  - **Better Theme:** Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice surpasses repeated, ineffective animal offerings, securing eternal redemption and motivating us to live better lives in our service to glorify God.

#### **D. The Better Covenant Enacted by Blood (9:15-22)**

1. As mediator, Jesus' death redeems sins under both covenants, fulfilling the "covenant" (Strong's G1242: diathēkē, also testament or will) with His blood (9:15-18).
  - a) "Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant" vs15
    - (1) Or, because Jesus' blood and sacrifice is so much better he is the mediator of the new covenant
      - (a) This was submitted to us in 8:6, too
      - (b) A mediator brings two parties together
      - (c) Jesus brings together God and his people
  - b) "so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgression committed under the first covenant" vs15
    - (1) The death that has taken place is the death of Jesus. The writer points out two reasons why Jesus had to die
      - (a) To redeem people from sin
      - (b) To institute the new covenant with himself as mediator
    - (2) Here is where we learn of the timeless nature of Jesus' blood. Not only does it forgive sin until the end of time, but it also reaches back and provides forgiveness to those who were faithful under the old covenant

- (a) Atonement in the Mosaic Law provided a covering of sins, but did not cleanse the conscience. However, the law clearly stated that they would be forgiven (cf Lev 4:20, 26,31,35) God also presented himself as one who forgave iniquity and transgression (Ex 34:6-7 and oft quoted by OT writers). We also have examples of individuals being told they were forgiven of their sin (cf 2 Sam 12:13, Is 6:7, Is 38:17). Jesus told people their sins were forgiven prior to the cross (Mt 9:2, Lk 7:48) How is this all possible? God knew he would sacrifice his son to provide forgiveness. The forgiveness seen under the law (before Jesus death) is a result of Jesus' sacrifice at the cross. Incredible power in the blood!
2. "For where there is a will involved, the death of one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive v16-17
- a) Here we see *diathēkē* translated in the ESV as will. It's the same as we've seen translated prior as covenant. There is some disagreement over what the correct translation is here. It would appear that will is the most natural reading. As it fits the context. A will can be in place, but nothing can be executed until a death takes place. He will make the point in vv 18-22 that the first covenant did not even go into effect without the death of animals.
- b) We learn something additional here. Jesus isn't simply the mediator of the covenant, he is also the author "the one who made it".
3. "Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood."
- a) Milligan says, 'The sixteenth and seventeenth verses are but an illustration of the fundamental principle submitted in the fifteenth, viz., that the death of Christ was necessary in order to redemption from sins committed under the Old Covenant, and also to the rightful inauguration of the New Covenant, so that all redeemed might have a legal right to the eternal inheritance.' P331
- b) While not specifically stated here, it becomes clear that the old was a shadow of that good things that have come.
4. Blood ratified all covenants (Ex 24:5-8; 1 Cor 11:25), but Jesus' blood surpasses animal blood in power (9:19-22).
- a) These verses recall what took place at Sinai with the covenant was inaugurated.
- (1) There are some details which differ from the Exodus account. Goats are not mentioned in Ex 24. Water, scarlet wool, and hyssop are not mentioned either, but it is likely these things were used to sprinkle the blood. We see their use in other places to sprinkle blood (McClister p334) There is also no mention here of the altar that is described in Ex 24, but that is where the sacrifice would have been made.
- (a) We have NT passages that mention details not included in the OT. These additional details should not give us pause, but create a more

vivid picture. The Hebrew writer is not adding anything controversial, just as we see other places. Some notable examples:

- (i) Noah as a preacher 2 Peter 2:5
  - (ii) Battle over Moses' body Jd 9
  - (iii) Enoch prophecy Jd 14-15
- b) Vs 22 makes the point that almost all things are cleansed with blood, and that sin cannot be forgiven without the shedding of blood.
- (1) Sin is not atoned for by work, by religious deeds, but by blood of Jesus. There is power in the blood of Jesus that is not present in the blood of bulls and goats.
- **Better Theme:** His sacrifice inaugurates a better covenant, timelessly effective for all who are called.

## E. The Better Heavenly Ministry (9:23-28)

1. Heavenly realities required better purification—not defilement, but consecration—by Christ's blood (9:23).
  - a) We return to a version of the phrase we were first introduced to in 8:5, 'copies of the heavenly things.' If the symbols, or examples, needed to be cleansed, it only makes sense that the heavenly, or better one, did as well. Not because of actual defilement in the presence of God. As we know, God cannot dwell with that which is unholy. McClister provides two possible interpretations:
    - (1) "The contrast between the earthly (9.1) and the heavenly (9.11ff) corresponds to the contrast between the flesh (9.10) and the conscience (9.9). Thus, the term heavenly things refers to the spiritual realities addressed and fixed (cleansed) in the work of Jesus, and in particular the conscience, which the Levitical sacrifices could not cleanse (9.9; 10.1). " .. . if the conscience is that part of man which belongs to a higher world, the perfection and cleansing of the conscience can occur only when the way is opened into the heavenly world."6 Thus the cleansing of the conscience (v 14) is here called the cleansing of the heavenly things."
    - (2) "As noted in the previous verse, once a thing was cleansed it was available for use in the service of God (cf. Exod 29.36; Lev 8.15; 1 Chron 23.28), and it is this result of purification that is in view here. That is, the point in this particular part of the author's presentation is that blood (because it cleanses) consecrates or inaugurates (vv 16ff), and this, then, is the sense conveyed in this verse. It is not that the heavenly sanctuary was defiled and need to be cleansed that is the point, but that that the new system of things that involved the use of the heavenly sanctuary had to be put into service or enacted, and blood is what enacts or puts something into the service of God. The old covenant was ratified or put into service with animal blood, but the new covenant was enacted by the blood of Christ. This interpretation fits the context best."



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2. Jesus entered heaven itself, not a handmade copy, interceding for us once, not repeatedly (9:24-25).
    - a) The Hebrew writer makes the point, again, that the earthly tabernacle was simply a copy (ch 8:5). Jesus could not perform his High Priestly duties there (ch 9:11). He went into the real one, which he calls heaven. And he did so on our behalf for all time. While Jesus has sat down at the right hand of God, his better sacrifice which enacted a better covenant continues to serve us. (Cf Heb 7:25. 4:14-16)
      - (1) McClister notes: "The NT does not depict God or Christ as detached and unconcerned in connection with our salvation. God has always wanted us to be with him, and so had Jesus, and even now our Lord stands in heaven interceding on our behalf. These truths were meant to encourage the readers to hold fast to their commitment (4:14), and they serve the same purpose for us today. P340
    - b) The writer is also driving home the point in vs 25 that sins have been dealt with once and for all. Jesus being in the heavenly tabernacle proves that sin has been put away forever. There is no going in and out. Sin has been put away, forever.
  3. His single sacrifice "put away" sin forever, unlike annual atonements (9:26-28).
    - a) Vs26 Christ's sacrifice was significantly better and different. If it weren't different, it would need to be like animal sacrifices, being done often (NKJV). But not only moving forward, going backward as well, which would contradict ch 9:15. People have been sinning since the beginning and a sacrifice was needed once and for all.
      - (1) There is a contrast here between "often" and "once"
        - (a) The word once is used frequently in this chapter and again in chapter 10. (vv7, 12, 26, 27, 28, 10:2). It's always used in reference to Christ's sacrifice.
        - (b) Often is used to describe the animal sacrifices.
        - (c) Since He only had to suffer once, it becomes clear that His sacrifice was sufficient for the sin problem
      - (2) "he has appeared" speaks to Him putting on human flesh, or manifesting Himself in human flesh in order to "put away sin" (cf 1 Jn 3:5)
        - (a) To "put away" sin (Strong's G115: *athetesis* ἀθέτησις) is to cancel the debt. Sin itself is not eradicated from our existence. We still see it, we still commit it. But the debt that comes from it has been paid by Jesus sacrifice on the cross. The penalty is no longer there. There is no reason to fear a punishment for our sin (Rm 8:1)
    - b) "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement," v27
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- (1) Speaks to that of physical death. The one unavoidable physical reality of life for all is the end of it (Rm 5:12). With a few exceptions (Enoch, Elijah, and those who will be alive at the second coming)
  - (2) Not only is death appointed to man, but so is judgement.
    - (a) This verse helps to validate that our physical death does not end our existence. Our physical bodies may be buried, but our souls continue to live on at judgment.
  - (3) McClister notes the following about this verse: “does two things: 1) It shows why the hypothetical suggestion of Jesus suffering and dying many times (vs26) does not happen, and 2) it introduces the simple fact that the death of Christ, as important as it is, is not the end of God’s plan.” He goes on to emphasize that Jesus’ sacrifice fits the normal expectation. One death that comes to all men. Our death is then followed by a day of judgement (Jn 12:48) p342-343
    - (a) There is no more second chance after death to have our standing before God change (Lk 16:19ff). Those who are not repentant are judged and condemned on the day of judgement, but also stand condemned while alive if they have not believed in the resurrected Christ.
- c) “So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many”
- (1) Affirming the one-time sacrifice of Christ.
  - (2) A sacrifice that was for all people. Jesus bore all of our sins (1 Ptr 2:24) He bore the penalty of sin as prophesied by Isaiah (Is 53:11-12). As noted earlier, Jesus’ coming was to put away sin. He made salvation possible for all.
- d) “will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”
- (1) The second time Jesus comes, it will be for salvation.
  - (2) He will not die a second time. He comes to bring reward to those who believe in Him. This is implied by those who eagerly await him (Phil 3:20, Rm 8:19-25)
- **Better Theme:** Christ’s heavenly ministry, enacted by His better blood, surpasses the old covenant’s temporary, earthly system by consecrating the true sanctuary, interceding once-for-all, and putting away sin forever – offering eternal redemption and the finality of salvation the old could never provide.

Building on the revelation of Christ’s better tabernacle and sacrifice, the writer now brings us to the climactic conclusion in Hebrews 10:1-18, where the full realization of the new covenant’s promises and the perfection of Jesus’ once-for-all offering stand in stark contrast to the old covenant’s fleeting shadows.

## IV. Hebrews 10:1-18: The Capstone of the Better Sacrifice

### A. The Old Law's Inadequacy (10:1-4)

1. "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come..."(10:1).
  - a) For links this back to what was discussed in chapter 9.
  - b) The main thought in this verse is that the old law sacrifices could not take away sins. Why? Because they were just a shadow and not the reality. He already made the point that the tabernacle itself was a shadow heavenly reality.
  - c) He is now making the same point about the law.
    - (1) The old law sacrifices were a shadow of Jesus sacrifice
    - (2) The law was only a shadow of the good things to come in Christ. The law was the shadow, the new covenant is the reality. It is the good, better thing.
  - d) A shadow may be like the form it casts, but it is not the reality.
    - (1) Everything about the old law and its practices were an imperfect copy of what God had ultimately intended.
  - e) The point becomes clear: the law cannot perfect a person, meaning it could not forgive a person's sins and bring them into right fellowship with God. Only reality could.
2. "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered?" vs2
  - (1) Once something is eradicated, it doesn't need to be addressed again. Christ's sacrifice did that. Old Testament sacrifices did not. As soon as the Day of Atonement was completed, they looked forward to the next cleansing. This was proof in and of itself that these offerings were not effective in eradicating sin.
3. "Since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no long have any consciousness of sins?"vs2
  - a) Jesus sacrifice not only takes care of sin in the mind of God, but the worshipper's as well, which the old could not (cf 9:9, 14).
  - b) Only way our conscience is clean is if there was a sacrifice that eliminated sin
4. "But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year"vs3

- a) The writer continues to hammer home the point that the old law was inadequate and it shows in the repetition of sacrifices. The sacrifices did not eliminate sin, they were a reminder of sin. There is no way of knowing the exact number of sacrifices that were made from the Sinai until Christ inaugurated the new covenant. It's innumerable. These sacrifices showed that sin was never forgiven. But all the blood spilled and even money spent (to purchase a sacrifice) was a regular reminder of the cost of redemption.
5. "For it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Vs5
- a) They could not take away sin because they were not willing sacrifices. The animals were not willing participants. Unlike the blood of God in the flesh
- b) Sin could only be taken away by a willing perfect sacrifice
- **Better Theme:** The old's ineffectiveness highlights the need for Christ's better, final solution.

## B. Christ's Better Sacrifice Fulfills God's Will (10:5-10)

1. The writer now quotes from Psalm 40:6-8. The writer quotes from the Lxx, which is indicated by the second half of verse 5 (vs 6 in Ps 40) replacing ear with body.
  - a) In Ps 40:6 "but you have given me an open ear" refers to the idea of a servant having his ear pierced with an awl, making him a willing servant for life (Ex 21:5-6)
  - b) Jesus became a willing servant is by offering his body
    - (1) We get a new understanding of the Ps. Instead of seeing it from anointed David's mouth to God father, we see it as THE Anointed to God the father. Jesus recognizes that the sacrifices and offerings did not satisfy the mind of God, but his own body being sacrificed did.
    - (2) We start to understand even more is that it is not the mind of the one offering the sacrifice that matters in terms of being satisfied, but only the mind of God.
2. Vs 6 provides us with a repeated thought from vs5. While God was pleased with sacrifices as they were commanded, it did not please him to please sin
3. "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book'"
  - a) Again, this is Jesus Christ saying this. He desires to do the will of God.
    - (1) We see this as Jesus prayed in the garden (Mt 26:39, 42; Mk 14:36,39; Lk 22:42)

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- (2) God's will is for:
- (a) people to be saved (1 Ptr 3:9)
  - (b) for Jesus to die (Is 53:10)
- b) "As it is written of me in the scroll of the book"
- (1) Should be understood that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the old testament scriptures. – Lk 24:27,44
4. Vs 8 points back to what was quoted from earlier in the Ps. God was not satisfied with the sacrifices under the old law and that their ultimate purpose was pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ. The Mosaic law cannot be seen as God's final provision for man.
5. "Behold, I have come to do your will" He does away with the first in order to establish the second v9
- a) He returns to what he said in vs 7. Jesus came to do what nobody else could. Sacrifice himself so that all men could be saved and be given the opportunity to be in a right relationship with God, and to establish a new covenant. He removed the first system with his sacrifice of himself. The first, the old, the law, was nailed to the cross (Col 2:14-16)
6. "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all" v10
- a) The first covenant was God's will for that time and served a purpose. However, God's current will, and His eternal will was always pointing forward to the new covenant. Why would anyone want to go back or remain in that system that never eliminated sin?
  - b) Sanctification to the Jewish mind cleansed the unclean person so that they could approach God in worship. The death of Jesus on the cross actually accomplished for us what the old law only did ritually.
  - c) We have been sanctified in Christ: 1 Cor 6:9-11, 1 Thes 4:3
  - d) This is the third time "once and for all" has been used (7:27, 9:12)
  - e) Only in Christ is salvation brought once because of one act. No other religion lays such a claim.
- **Better Theme:** Jesus' voluntary sacrifice, perfectly fulfilling God's will, surpasses the old covenant's inadequacy by satisfying divine intent, abolishing the temporary law, establishing the eternal new covenant, and sanctifying us once for all—offering a better redemption no other system can match.

### C. The Better Priesthood Completed (10:11-14)

1. Levitical priests stood daily, offering ineffective sacrifices; Jesus sat down, His single offering perfecting the sanctified (10:11-12).

- a) The writer continues to show that even daily activity by the priests, while obedient, were unable to forgive sins.
  - b) Priests were coming in and out. Jesus went in once and satisfied the mind of God. Sins were forgiven and he sat down at the right hand of God. A huge contrast. The visual of Christ sitting down shows the perfection of his one time sacrifice. It validates his work.
2. He awaits victory over enemies (Ps 110:1), a done deal (10:13-14).
- a) Once again, the writer returns to Ps 110. Vs4 was used often to prove Christ's priesthood in this letter. He returns to the Psalm to show that there is no more sacrificing to be done by him as High Priest.
    - (1) The picture from vs 1 of the Ps is that of the victor in conquest (Josh 10:24-25). This will be fulfilled at Jesus' second coming (9:28)
      - (a) McClister points out that we should not see Jesus as passive in his reign until that time comes. We see him judging and defeating enemies while protecting his people throughout the NT. Revelation is a good example of this.
    - b) Paul tells us that the last enemy is death and that will happen at the day of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:26). As with any battle involving God (cf Rev 16:16-17), the outcome is predetermined.
      - **Better Theme:** Jesus' better finished work contrasts with the priests' endless labor, ensuring eternal perfection and victory.

#### **D. The Better Covenant's Fulfillment (10:15-18, quoting Jer 31:33-34)**

1. The Holy Spirit confirms the new covenant's promise: sins are forgiven and forgotten, needing no further sacrifice. See notes in 8:8-12 (10:15-18).
  - **Better Theme:** The capstone—Christ's sacrifice fully realizes the better promises, sealing the new covenant's superiority, with no further sacrifice required to forgive sin.

### **V. Conclusion: Encouragement and Action**

- The "better" theme builds from a better priesthood (8:4-6) to a better covenant (8:7-13), a better tabernacle (9:1-11), and a better sacrifice (9:12-10:18), culminating in forgiveness and access to God.
- Encouragement: Trust in Christ's finished work, not obsolete shadows, for assurance of forgiveness (10:2-3).
- Action: While the scope of this text is more theological and doctrinal in nature, teaching us to rely on the sacrifice that Christ made once and for all, there are some applications we can make or action we can take. Much of the rest of the book will address specific applications, but here are a few we can walkway with

- Jesus made us holy and pure: do not return to the world. We have put on a new self, given to us by Christ's sacrifice. We are no longer of the world. Flee sin and pursue holiness (cf 12:1-2, 14; 1 Peter 1:15-16)
- Jesus has not just given the better, he has given us his best. We respond by giving our best to God. Focus on serving others with love (cf Gal 5:13, Heb 13:1-3) reflecting Christ's self-offering (9:14, 10:5-7). Pressing toward the goal (Phil 3:14). Remaining humble and open to correction (Acts 18:24ff) to serve better.
- Jesus has made us sanctified priests (9:14; Rom 12:1:2). May we obey God's better way in the new covenant, including in our worship as He determines while also offering ourselves as living sacrifices and interceding for others in prayer (1 Tim 2:1).
- Jesus proclaimed the good news. May we share to proclaim the hope of Christ's better sacrifice (10:23, 1 Peter 3:15) and the redemption for all (9:15,28) in his death, burial, and resurrection.

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## Faith Unto the Saving of the Soul

*Chase D. Byers*

Text: Hebrews 10:19-12:13

### Introduction

“You of little faith.” A rebuke we hear often from Jesus in the gospels (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20). But it is not unwarranted for Jesus to say that to his disciples, and it certainly is not unwarranted for us to hear either. This world we live in is constantly reminding us of how active the devil is and how present and ready death is to take us. In a world that tries to blind us, we are told to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

- a. “They were yet double-minded. In this state the temptation was strong to scorn a faith-way, that seemed to be ineffectual. Jesus was no longer visible, and the promise of His return had not been fulfilled. Would it not be better to walk by sight rather than faith, to return to Moses and the Temple? Better to have something concrete and visible than to cling doggedly to a faith in what seemed to be a never-never land of uncertainty and nebulous hope. In the throes of this struggle, they were in peril of repeating the error of their fathers (Exod. 32:1).” (Taylor, pg. 137)

Certainly, this is what the Hebrews Christians were facing: the temptation to turn back on Jesus all together in the face of persecution and suffering (Heb. 3:7-19; 10:32-39). Leading up to this grand finale to have faith in God despite what is happening around them, the Hebrew writer anticipated this final speech on faith throughout his exhortations:

- a. 2:18 - “For since he himself has suffered when he was tempted, **he is able to help** those who are tempted.”
  - i. What is the point here? Have faith in the one who can help!
- b. 3:6 – “But **Christ was faithful** as a Son over his household. And we are that household **if we hold on to our confidence** and the hope in which we boast.”
- c. 3:19 – “So we see that they were **unable to enter because of unbelief.**”
  - i. ἀπιστία (apistia) could just as easily be translated “unfaithfulness”. (Strong’s)
  - ii. Another synonym for “faith” is “trust”.
- d. 4:2 - “For we also have received the good news just as they did. But the message they heard did not benefit them, since **they were not united with those who heard it in faith.**”
- e. 6:1-2 – “Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, **faith in God**, teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”
- f. 6:12 – “so that you won’t become lazy but will be imitators of those who **inherit the promises through faith** and perseverance.”



In this final push to greater faithfulness, the Hebrew writer will remind his audience of what godly faith is capable of. The following 5 points will serve as our outline:

1. Faith Gives us Full Assurance (10:19-25)
2. Faith Keeps Us from Drawing Back (10:26-39)
3. Faith Helps Us Look Forward (11:1-40)
4. Faith Has Been Perfected (12:1-3)
5. Faith Suffers Purposefully (12:4-13)

## I. Faith Gives us Full Assurance (10:19-25)

This section undoubtedly serves as a bridge between his exhortation that began in 7:1, to this new exhortation that he begins in 10:26. This conclusion begins with 2 well-established premises and is followed with 3 “Let us...”. Maybe another way to think about it is the 3 applications. “Exposition transitions into application.” (Grindheim, introductory comments on Heb. 10:19-39)

### I. We Have... (vs 19-21)

#### A. Boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood (vs 19)

- a. How much clearer could he have made it in the previous exhortation? The blood of Jesus is what grants us access to the Father.
  1. 9:12 – “**he entered the most holy place** once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood**, having obtained eternal redemption.”
  2. The encouragement to boldness is contrasted with the Day of Atonement and its surrounding procedures (9:6-10)
- b. The covenant and “curtain” were also addressed in chapter 9.
  1. 9:15 – “Therefore, he is the **mediator of a new covenant**”
  2. 9:24 – “For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands (only a model of the true one) **but into heaven itself, so that he might now appear in the presence of God for us.**”
  3. Here in vs 20-21, visions of the “curtain being torn in two” should come to mind. (Matt. 27:51)
- c. This boldness is not an arrogant and entitled boldness, but a humble and confident recognition that Jesus was successful in his mission to bring salvation to us.
- d. He brought his blood to God as an offering on our behalf. Something the other NT writers consistently remind us of.
  1. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “He **made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
  2. Romans 8:3b – “**He condemned sin** in the flesh by **sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering.**”

3. Galatians 3:13a – “**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us,**”
4. 1 Peter 2:24a – “**He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree;**”
- e. This “inauguration” (CSB, NASB) is what gives us a “new and living way”.
  1. “inauguration” in vs 20 is the same Greek word (ἐγκαινίζω) in 9:18 – “That is why even the first covenant was **inaugurated** with blood.”
  2. “to renew, i.e. inaugurate: — consecrate, dedicate.” (Strong’s)
    - a. How exciting to be a part of Jesus’ inauguration and new law! This “new and living way” was certainly the main thrust of the Hebrew writer’s admonition to encourage his Jewish audience.
  3. 2 ideas are possible when envisioning this “inauguration” (“through his flesh”)
    - a. “Jesus’ passing through the veil of his flesh refers to his death on the cross and his subsequent ascension to God’s right hand. Interpreted this way, the inauguration is the “event” of Jesus reaching heaven, and thereby opening up the way for us to come after him (thus fitting with descriptions of Jesus as “pioneer” (2.10 and 12.2) or “forerunner,” (6:20)).” (McClister, pg. 369)
    - b. “Jesus’ passing through the veil of his flesh refers to his incarnation, his taking on human form. Thus the statement recalls the discussion in Hebrews 2. When interpreted this way, the term “inauguration” summarizes the earthly work of Jesus.” (McClister, pg. 369)
  4. I think a combination of both ideas is entirely appropriate.

## B. A great high priest over the house of God (vs 21)

- a. Because Jesus is the one who brought His blood to God as an offering, then it would make sense for him to also be the high priest over God’s house.
  1. Hebrews 3:6 – “But Christ was faithful as a Son **over his household**. And **we are that household** if we hold on to our confidence and the hope in which we boast.”

## II. Let Us... (vs 22-25)

### A. Draw near (vs 22)

- a. It is time for them to boldly approach God, not draw back from Him. (3:12; 6:6; 10:39)
  1. “With the portrait of believers confidently stepping up to this throne, the author is presenting a bold idea. As elsewhere in Hebrews, the picture that is conveyed by the verb “draw near” (*proserchomai*) is that of an audience with the king. At the same time, the overtones are of an intimate encounter.” (Grindheim, comments on Heb. 10:22)
- b. 2 parts of us can draw near: our hearts and our bodies.
  1. “with a true **heart** in full assurance of faith”
    - a. First, with a “true heart”.
      - i. This true heart may be contrasted with the “hardened” or “unbelieving” heart mentioned in 3:7-15.

- ii. Hezekiah's prayer in Isaiah 38:3 comes to mind here: "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You **in truth and with a whole heart**, and have done what is good in Your sight." (NASB)
- b. Secondly, this assurance through faith ought to be "full", not half-hearted.
  - i. And yet, how often do we hear brethren say "I hope God lets me into heaven." Or how often do we find ourselves believing we will never have "done enough" to earn our way in?
  - ii. The Great High Priest the Hebrew writer has unfolded for us should leave us with boldness and confidence in the final day.
  - iii. This assurance comes from nothing we have done, but everything our high priest has done for us. So the call is to put full trust in Him.
  - iv. Hebrews 6:19 – "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, **firm and secure**. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain."
- 2. "our **hearts** sprinkled clean from an evil conscience"
  - a. Drawing our hearts near to God should necessarily provoke change with how we think about things. Especially evil.
  - b. Our conscience under the old Law was discussed at length in the previous section. (9:9, 14; 10:2)
  - c. "The man who has offended God by his behavior, words, or thoughts and so has no solid ground of hope for par. don is entirely unfit for fellowship with the holy and just God of the Bible. Prior to his coming to God, he must get rid of this evil conscience." (King, pg. 324)
- 3. "our **bodies** washed in pure water"
  - a. I believe it is entirely appropriate to see this as a reference to our immersion in Jesus' name.
    - i. Titus 3:5 is another passage that I believe references baptism into Christ without using the formal βαπτίζω.
  - b. The tense for the word "washed" (αελουσμένοι) is helpful to see.
    - i. "This is the second of the two perfect tense participles which describe the Christian's approach as having been preceded by something that leaves lingering effects. They have had their bodies washed with pure water, perhaps even many decades ago, but the marvelous result continues into the present." (King, pg. 324)
    - ii. Our minds ought to go back to that day we were drawn to God in the waters of baptism. The nearness we felt to Him then, is how close we should feel to Him now, if not closer.

## B. Hold on (vs 23)

- a. If we are this near to God, then it is time for us to cling to him with all our might.
  - 1. The same admonition given in 3:6, 14.

- b. We hang on to our confession of hope.
  - 1. The same admonition in 6:19 – “We have this hope as an anchor of the soul, firm and secure.”
  - 2. A similar confession made by the patriarchs. (11:13-16)
- c. We can hang on because he who promised is faithful.
  - 1. I believe this phrase is helpful to have in mind as we read 11:1-40. Yes, these people conquered by faith, but it was because God is faithful to his promises.
    - a. Joshua 21:45 – “**None of the good promises the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed.** Everything was fulfilled.”
    - b. 2 Timothy 2:13 – “if we are faithless, **he remains faithful**, for he cannot deny himself.”
    - c. Ephesians 6:10 – “Finally, be **strengthened by the Lord** and by **his vast strength.**”

### C. Consider (vs 24-25)

- a. **How to provoke** one another to love and good works
  - 1. We can often become so self-absorbed that we struggle to think about our brethren, let alone think about how to “provoke” or “stir” one another to greater discipleship.
  - 2. This verse is obviously the precursor to the often-quoted Heb. 10:25. Instead of only hammering vs 25 over people’s head as a command, explaining the “why” will help others to see why they need to be at church gatherings.
    - a. A practical suggestion: encourage brethren to go through the directory and write down ways they want to “stir up” others in their congregation to love and good deeds.
    - b. If we will see the need for that, then we will want to be at the church gatherings to accomplish this.
- b. **Not neglecting to gather together**
  - 1. “as some are in the habit of doing”
    - a. If it was a problem then, we ought not be surprised that it is a problem now.
    - b. Neglecting to gather with the church is only a symptom of greater heart problems.
  - 2. Which gathering is it?
    - a. Most likely he is referring to the gathering of Jesus’ people on the first day of the week. (also Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; 5:4; 14:23, 26; James 2:2)
    - b. It would seem many are missing the gatherings because of fear of persecution, not so much laziness (as is our problem often today).

- i. “Apparently, the opposition these Christians were facing, and the fear it generated, had caused some to dissociate themselves from other Christians, at least to the point of willfully absenting themselves from the worship gathering (contrast 11.25; 12.3). Although it was undoubtedly done in an attempt to distance oneself from the group that was the object of continual social reproach, the author described it in terms of weakness in their faith in Jesus.” (McClister, pg. 376)

**c. How to encourage each other**

1. This is one of many purposes for our gathering together. Yet another opportunity to find someone to encourage and exhort in the Lord.
2. “all the more as you see the day approaching”
  - a. The writer sees an urgency to encourage one another, because a day is approaching. What day is he talking about? There are 4 possibilities, all with good cases.
    - i. Day of Jesus’ return and final judgment
      - a. This “day” has been in the writer’s view already in 9:28 and will come up again in 10:27.
      - b. This kind of exhortation is familiar to the NT. In many places we are given instruction in the light of this final day of the “Lord” or “judgment”. (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; Phil. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:1, 5, 8; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:10-12; 1 John 4:17)
      - c. The only problem with this view is how would they be able to “see this day approaching” if it is true that it would come “like a thief in the night”? (1 Thess. 5:2)
        - i. Grindheim handles this well: “Regarding the time when this day would come, the fundamental idea in the New Testament is expressed by Jesus himself: “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32 parr.). At the same time, the expectation is that he will not delay (Luke 18:7-8). Therefore, the writings of the New Testament are characterized by the expectation of his imminent coming. The same conviction underlies the author’s language about the day approaching. It would be a mistake to detect specific signs of the end time behind this expression.” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 10:25)
    - ii. Day of trial and persecution
      - a. This “day” is one these brethren were familiar with. And in the next section he will remind them of such days (10:32-34).
    - iii. Day of coming destruction and judgment on Jerusalem (70 AD)
      - a. This phrase “day of the Lord” is used to talk about the coming destruction for various world empires throughout the Bible. (Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18-24; Zeph. 1:2-3.)
      - b. Jesus talked about this same Jerusalem destruction in Mark 13 and Matthew 24. Having reassured his audience that, “this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place.” (Mark 13:31)

- c. Going along with that, Jesus gave his disciples signs to look for as that day approaches. This obviously would connect well with what was stated: “as you see the day approaching.”
- d. “No doubt, therefore, the Christians in Palestine were all looking forward with much anxiety to the time when this prophecy would be fulfilled. They would naturally speak of it as " the day;" the day of trial; the day when seeing Jerusalem encompassed with armies, they would themselves have to flee to the mountains (Luke xxi. 20-22) (Milligan, pg. 284)
- e. However, this view would then suggest that Hebrews is written to a pre-70AD audience. And although there is some internal evidence to support this, there is also good evidence to suggest this was written after the destruction.
  - i. If it was written before, it would make sense that he is warning them to not put their hope in the Old Law and it’s various physical elements. Because of course it is about to be destroyed.
  - ii. On the other hand, if it was written after, these would be good reminders in case any are mourning the loss of these things and being tempted to turn back to Judaism. These things are not a loss when you consider how far better Jesus and His Priesthood are.
  - iii. In my view, this book is using the Old Law to show them how much better things are in Jesus. Not so much because they are thinking about turning back to Judaism, but because they are being tempted to turn their back on Jesus all together.
- iv. “The day” refers to growth in the faith and the attainment of maturity. 2 Pet. 1:19; cf. Eph. 5:14. Understood in this way, growth in the faith is pictured as a coming out of darkness into the light of day. This would understand the author’s exhortation to mean “as you see yourselves growing in the faith, then especially be about the business of encouraging each other.” (McClister, pg. 378).
- b. Whatever is meant by this “day”, one thing is certain: if we hold on to these things, we can be confident and bold on that “day.”
  - i. “The expectation that this day was approaching should fill the audience with increased concern for their backsliding brothers and sisters. They should be all the more eager to see them restored, so that the day of the Lord would be a day of rejoicing and not of torment.” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 10:25)

## II. Faith Keeps Us from Drawing Back (10:26-39)

This is yet another section of Hebrews where the writer will passionately exhort the brethren to not fall away from the Lord (3:12-19; 6:4-8). He begins with clear warnings that those who fall away can expect a “terrifying judgement and a “fury of fire” (vs 27). But then moves right into a section that reminds them of their previous trials and how they displayed confidence and endurance throughout, so why would they react any differently this time around? He then sets up his next section with a reminder that “we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved.” In my mind, the writer gives 3 main reasons why we don’t draw back.

### I. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (vs 26-31)

#### A. If we deliberately go on sinning (vs 26-28)

- a. “after receiving the knowledge of the truth” – It is clear he is talking about those who are committed believers of Jesus who have turned their back on him.
  1. To sin “deliberately” or “willfully” is important to note. He is not talking about the soul who is in the thick of the battle and is fighting sin, but someone who has laid down and given way to Satan and his ways.
    - a. To no surprise, this verse has given commentators who believe in “once saved always saved” some issues. Calvin himself said of these verses, “Christ’s sacrifice is efficacious to the godly even to death, though they often sin; nay, it retains ever its efficacy, for this very reason, because they cannot be free from sin as long as they dwell in the flesh.” (Calvin, 244)
  2. King mentions some Old Testament overshadow that is interesting: “Such intentional transgression was described under the old covenant as having been committed "with a high hand," as opposed to that which was "accidental" or "unintentional" (Exod. 21:14; Lev. 4:2, 13, 22; 4:27; 5:14; Num. 15:24, 27-30; Deut. 17:12; Ps. 19:13; compare Acts 3:17; 17:30). No sacrifice was available to atone for deliberate sin.” (King, pg. 333)
  3. The consequence is scary to consider: “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”
    - a. Why is this? Reminds me of Samuel’s response to Saul’s deliberate disobedience: “Then Samuel said: Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22)
  - b. The writer then brings in a contrast from the law of Moses about sin that is worthy of the death penalty, citing Deut. 17:6. But the contrast is then to “how much worse punishment” it would be in this New Covenant.
    1. This construct is what is known as *a fortiori* (latin) meaning, “from the stronger”. The idea is “from the lesser to the greater”. We see the Hebrew writer use this construct in several other places: 2:2-3; 6:4-7; 9:13-14; 27-28; 12:7-9.

#### B. Trample on the Son of God (vs 29a)

- a. I hear a reversal of Psalm 110:1 (and 10:13) in this. The Son of God was to “Sit at my

right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” And here it is us who have turned our backs on him and have put him under our feet to trample.

### C. Regard as profane the blood of the covenant (vs 29b)

- a. Clearly echoes the truths from chapter 9-10 about the uniqueness and holiness of Jesus’ blood. He shed it so we could enter into a covenant with him. How profane (see the contrast to the holiness of his blood in 9:12) it is to dismiss his blood altogether and keep on sinning.

### D. Insult the Spirit of Grace (vs 29c)

- a. This phrase is unique to this passage. What an insult to reject the greatest gift God has ever given to man: grace.
- b. “With this description of the apostates, the author has alluded to the key elements of his argument: the exalted nature of the Son, his eternally effective sacrifice, and the transformative gift granted to believers. The apostates have rejected the Son, his work, and his gift—an unspeakable affront to God.” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 10:29)

### E. The result? – “I will repay” (vs 30-31)

- a. A reference is made to Deut. 32:35-36.
  1. “Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay” is exactly how the MT text read.
  2. “The Lord will judge his people” is from the LXX. The MT texts reads, “the Lord will indeed vindicate his people.”
    - a. Guthrie’s comments are helpful here: “The quotation of two phrases from Deut. 32:35-36 should be understood as reinforcing the idea that God severely judges those who reject his covenant in Christ. Although 32:36 in its original context could be taken as a reference to the Lord's vindication of those who truly are his (so Christensen 2002: 818), it seems that the author of Hebrews is reading the verse, and specifically the word *krino* in the LXX version, as a statement of judgment. First, as explained above, the context is one of harsh warning. The two-part quotation is used to reinforce the idea of severe punishment in the warning, and it is followed immediately by the statement in 10:31: "It is frightful to fall into the hands of the living God." Second, when the author uses the connecting phrase *kai palin* ("and again") to join two portions of Scripture, he normally is connecting parallel ideas (1:5; 2:13; 4:5), and the first part of this two-part quotation clearly has God's wrath in view.” (Guthrie, pg. 980)
- b. The writer’s point is clear: for those even among God’s people who sin willfully, His wrath will be poured out.

## II. You have already endured so much. (vs 32-38)

### A. Earlier persecution (vs 32-34)

- a. It seems evident to me that this letter was written to a Jewish Christian audience. But where were they located?



- b. Although impossible to know, it is possible these are Jerusalem saints, maybe those who were a part of the persecution connected to Stephen's death in Acts 8.
- c. The extent of the former persecution
  - 1. "endured a hard struggle with sufferings" (vs 32)
  - 2. "publicly exposed to taunts and afflictions" (vs 33)
  - 3. "other times you were companions of those were treated that way." (vs 33)
  - 4. "sympathized with the prisoners" (vs 34)
    - a. A familiar admonition to them in 13:3
  - 5. "accepted with joy the confiscation of your possessions" (vs 34)
    - a. The why is important: "because you know that you yourselves have a better and enduring possession." (vs 34)
      - i. Much suffering can be navigated when we see the value of the things around us that cannot be taken away.
      - ii. This attitude is seen in the apostle Paul in Phil. 1:12-26.
- d. This "former suffering" reminds me of the list of things Paul endured in 2 Cor. 11:23-27.
- e. What is his point? – If you went through this once before, you can do it again!

#### **B. Shown confidence and endurance (vs 35-36)**

- a. How foolish it would be to "throw away your confidence" when you have come this far and already been through this previously.
- b. If anything, their past trials ought to shape them and strengthen them for the one to come.
- c. They need more endurance, even more than they had before.
  - 1. Just as they "knew of a better and enduring possession" in vs 34, so also now they need to think about what God has promised if they do His will.

#### **C. Proof text – Hab. 2:3-4 (vs 37-38)**

- a. There is also a touch of Isaiah 26:20-21 LXX in here.
- b. 3 components to this quotation that each have relevance to the Hebrews circumstances:
  - 1. "the Coming One will come and not delay"
    - a. As was the question in 10:25 – What coming is this?
      - i. All the same possibilities are on the table. However, having the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 in view would make a lot of sense.
        - a. If this is to saints in Jerusalem, things are about to get difficult.
        - b. When "the Coming One" gets there, he is bringing judgment. But he is also bringing protection for his elect. (Mark 13:24-27)
      - ii. Seeing this as Jesus' final coming is also plausible.

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- a. “First, this quotation shares two prominent elements with the quotation of Ps. 39:7-9a LXX (40:7-9a MT; 40:6-8a ET), quoted at 10:5-8. Both concern one who is "coming" and that which does not give God pleasure. As we have seen, the quotation from Ps. 39 LXX concerns Christ's first coming, the incarnation, and God's lack of pleasure in the old-covenant sacrifices. Here, Christ's second coming is in view, and it is those who shrink away from perseverance who fail to give God pleasure.” (Guthrie, pg. 982)
  - 2. “my righteous one will live by faith”
    - a. Other NT uses of this: Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11.
      - i. In these contexts, Paul is using Hab. 2:4 to emphasize the justification of faith. Where the Hebrew writer is using it more as an hortatory hammer to show that we don’t shrink back, but we put trust in God and move forward.
    - b. This will be his thesis for the next chapter. Several examples in the Old Testament of those who were righteous and lived by faith.
  - 3. “if he draws back, I have no pleasure in him.”
    - a. More on this when we get to his own admonition in vs 39.
  - c. Seeing the original context for both Isaiah 26 and Habakkuk 2 is helpful.
    - 1. Isaiah 26 context
      - a. Vs 1-6 – A song in the land of Judah. “trust in the LORD forever” (vs 4)
      - b. Vs 7-10 – The righteous wait on the Lord and his judgments
      - c. Vs 11-18 – The LORD vindicates his people.
      - d. Vs 19 – The Lord’s dead will rise again.
      - e. Vs 20-21 – God’s people will hide as he brings forth justice on his enemies.
    - 2. Habakkuk 2 context
      - a. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time God answers Habakkuk in the book. He will go on to emphasize the wrath that is going to be outpoured on his enemies with a series of 5 “woes”.
      - b. Before these “woes”, he reassures Habakkuk of a few things:
        - i. This pronouncement of judgment is to be written clearly (vs 2)
        - ii. This judgment will happen. (vs 3)
        - iii. But the righteous have nothing to fear if they live by faith. (vs 4)
        - iv. But others will inflate their egos and trust in vain things (vs 4-5)

### III. We are not of those who draw back. (vs 39)

#### A. Many have drawn back

- a. It would be hard not to think about those even within their own congregations who have fallen back.
  - 1. Paul will sometimes mention people by name who fit this bill. (2 Tim. 4:10)

- b. Being “destroyed” is what awaits the one who draws back.
  - 1. KJV – “draw back unto perdition”
  - 2. The thought of a soldier “drawing back” or being a “defector” comes to mind.
    - a. Again, the thought in Hebrews is not only drawing back to Judaism but drawing back from Jesus altogether.
    - b. We must draw near, not draw back. (10:22)

**B. Many have not drawn back.**

- a. Another way to set up the next chapter. There are many of our God-fearing ancestors who did not draw back, but had faith and were saved.

**C. Faith will save.**

- a. These final words are echoed in a long-time favorite hymn, Faith is the Victory.
  - 1. “Encamped along the hills of light,  
Ye Christian soldiers rise,  
And press the battle ere the night  
Shall veil the glowing skies;  
Against the foe in vales below  
Let all our strength be hurled;  
Faith is the victory, we know,  
That overcomes the world.”
  - 2. “His banner over us is love,  
Our sword the Word of God;  
We tread the road the saints before  
With shouts of triumph trod.  
By faith, they like a whirlwind’s breath,  
Swept on o’er every field;  
The faith by which they conquered death  
Is still our shining shield.” (Faith is the Victory, Yates)
- b. This is the framework for the next chapter: the road the saints before us triumphly trod.

### **III. Faith Helps Us Look Forward (11:1-40)**

So many names have been given to try and summarize this chapter. “Roll call of the faithful” and the “hall of fame of faith.” I like calling it “those who did not draw back.” However, as impressed as we may end up being at the example of these faithful servants of God, they should only impress us all the more at the Perfector of Faith that the writer is going to get us to in 12:1-3. “Consider Him...”

Many attempts have been made to “outline” this chapter. Guthrie provides a helpful one:

A. “Hebrews 11:1-40 may be divided as follows:

- (1) prologue (11:1-3)
- (2) movement 1: first examples of faith (11:4-12)
- (3) interlude: a faith of pilgrims (11:13-16)
- (4) movement 2: more examples of faith (11:17-31)
- (5) crescendo and conclusion (11:32-40)

The intention is to challenge hearers to live lives of faith as seen in those who by faith had followed God in various aspects of life.” (Guthrie, pg. 984)

## I. Vs 1-3 – Concept of Faith Introduced

### A. Faith is defined (vs 1)

- a. This is not the only way to understand biblical faith and how we receive it (Rom. 10:17). But it is the working definition that the writer builds off.
- b. In other words, what he goes on to illustrate with these people’s faith helps us understand his working definition of faith.
- c. Another helpful way to think about this definition is that “we believe in God’s promises for the future, in spite of what may seem like contradictory evidence, in the present.” (Tommy Peeler, sermon from 2018, Brandon Church of Christ)
- d. “To serve his argument, the author’s definition of faith (v. 1) says nothing about the object of faith; it concentrates on its subjective aspects.” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:6)

### B. Faith is essential (vs 2)

- a. It was essential for our faithful ancestors.
- b. They “gained approval”
  1. Of Abel it says “he was **approved**” (11:4)
  2. Of Enoch it says “for he obtained the **witness**” (11:5, NASB)
  3. In 12:1 it calls these people a “cloud of **witnesses**”.

### C. Faith allows us to see things we did not see with our natural eye. (vs 3)

- a. This is exactly what he will go on to demonstrate with all these people.
- b. He starts with this example to help us see that this principle of “believing without seeing” is fundamental to how we view even our own existence.

## II. Vs 4 – By Faith Abel

### A. Offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain (Genesis 4:1-8)

- a. What made Able’s sacrifice better?
  1. Was it because Abel used an animal and Cain used fruit?

- a. Unlikely, grain offerings and other kind of harvest offerings will later be commanded.
2. Was it because Abel gave of his firstlings? (Not said of Cain)
  - a. Possible, this would later be commanded of some sacrifices.
  - b. Is there an emphasis on *what* Able brought and *how much* value it had? Opposed to Cain simply having brought “some of the land’s produce”? (Gen. 4:3)
3. Ultimately, it was offered by faith.
  - a. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (11:6)
  - b. One also sees how obedience and faith go hand in hand. Cain’s heart is revealed in his next actions.
  - c. Abel’s attitude is found right here in Hebrews 11.

#### **B. Was approved as a righteous man.**

- a. The LXX said of Abel in Gen. 4:4, “and God looked upon Abel and his gifts” (Brenton).
- b. God saw something in Abel that he did not see in Cain: a righteous man. Therefore he received God’s “approval”.
- c. This is all man is seeking when we bring our worship and sacrifice to God.
  1. Romans 12:1 – “Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.**”

#### **C. Still spoke through death.**

- a. Some believe this is a reference to Abel’s blood crying out in the field. (Gen. 4:10)
- b. But still today we are talking about this man. He was simply a faithful man of God. What do we want to be remembered for?
- c. Abel’s blood is brought back up in 12:24 to show how far better the blood of Jesus speaks.
  1. The idea being: the innocent blood of Abel being shed by a jealous and envious man, works as a foreshadow to Jesus’ blood being shed by jealous and envious men.

### **III. Vs 5 – By Faith Enoch**

#### **A. Did not experience death. (Gen. 5:18-24)**

- a. This is new information for us, Gen. 5:24 only stated, “then he was not there because God took him”. What it means that God “took him” is only found here in Hebrews 11.
- b. This is what faith in God will do. And although we will all die; it is often referred to as “being asleep” for those in Christ. (1 Thess. 4:13)

#### **B. Was one who pleased God.**

- a. “Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:24)
  - 1. The same said of Noah (Gen. 6:9)
- b. Walking with God is an intimate idea. Paul talks about how we used to walk (Eph. 2:1-3) and how we should now walk in Christ (Eph. 4:1ff).

#### IV. Vs 6 – Without Faith...

##### A. This verse is the first “application” interruption. (also vs 13-16, 25-26)

- a. In the case of Abel and Enoch faith was essential.
  - 1. Two men who in many ways are opposites.
    - a. Abel, the first person to die.
    - b. Enoch never died.
- b. No matter our circumstances in life, we must have faith to be pleasing to God.
- c. Their faith is covered more generally, using them as “warm-ups” to some greater ideas.

##### B. Those who want to please God and draw near to him must:

- a. Believe that He exists
  - 1. πίστις (faith or believing) is often connected to the miracles of Jesus. (Matt. 9:2, 22; 15:28; Mark 10:52; Luke 17:19)
  - 2. I believe this is why Jesus could not do any miracles in his hometown (Mark 6:1-6). Specifically, “And he was amazed at their unbelief”. (Mark 6:6)
    - a. Not because his power was fueled by people’s ability to believe, but because no one was coming to him in faith of who he was demonstrating he was.
- b. Is a rewarder of those who seek him.
  - 1. Something the writer will expound on more in 11:13-16.
- c. “The description reveals that faith is a fundamentally relational concept. Its setting is the approach to God. When the author uses the term that is translated “approaches” (*proserchomai*), it has connotations of being in God’s company or presence (cf. commentary on 4:16). When someone enters into any kind of relationship, two presuppositions must be met, one cognitive and one relational. First, it is necessary to be aware of the existence of the other party in the relationship. Second, and more importantly, some level of trust that the other party will respond positively is also required.” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:6)

#### V. Vs 7 – By Faith Noah

##### A. Built an ark

- a. Despite being warned by God about what was not yet seen.
  - 1. At this point in the Genesis narrative there is no mention of rain.
  - 2. If there was rain, there obviously had not been a global flood like what was to come.

3. When Noah was warned by God, he responded obediently and promptly based solely off the Word of God.
  4. Noah was the first of these men who explicitly took God at his word. This faith was forward-looking at something he had not yet seen.
- b. Motivated by godly fear
1. “in reverence prepared...” (NASB)
  2. Noah’s motivation was not rooted in selfish desires, but out of respect and fear of who God is.

## B. Condemned the world

- a. 2 thoughts come to mind from this phrasing:
1. 2 Peter 2:5 – “and if he didn’t spare the ancient world, but protected **Noah, a preacher of righteousness**, and seven others, when he brought the flood on the world of the ungodly”
    - a. If we take this verse literally, as I think we should, Noah was preaching as he was building. Maybe in hopes that others would board this ark God commanded him to build.
      - i. Some apologists have suggested that there was ample room for the ark to accommodate more than just 8 people.
        - a. “Based on two-thirds of the total available square footage (96,750 sq. ft.) of the Ark, or 64,500 sq. ft., and taking 25% of the remaining space for stores, leaves 48,375 sq. ft. for passengers. Allowing 80 sq. ft. per a family of four, or 20 sq. ft. per person (the average size of an 8’ x 10’ two-man prison cell), and dividing 48,375 by 80 yields about 605 living spaces. At four people per space, that comes to 2420 total passengers. More could have been accommodated if needed.” (Carrasco, icr.edu)
  2. Noah condemned the world by showing that it is possible to act on God’s word and obey solely out of reverence and love for God. He did not act off of what was seen, but what he was told.

## C. “Became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”

- a. Like Abel and Enoch before him, Noah’s faith is directly tied to his righteousness.
- b. Again, supporting the writer’s thesis: “my righteous one will live by faith.” (10:38)

## VI. Vs 8-19 – By Faith Abraham

### A. Obeyed and set out when he was called (vs 8) (Gen. 12:1-7)

- a. Called out of the land of Ur and Haran (idolatry)

1. “By this point in history, idolatry and wickedness had again sprung up. In Ur and Haran, they worshipped the moon god (Waltke, see also Hamilton.) Some of this family had fallen into the trap of idolatry. Terah and those fathers who lived beyond the Euphrates are specifically noted as serving other gods (Josh 24.2). Nahor's wife, Milah, had a name that may have been derived from the title of the goddess Ishtar, daughter of the moon god Sin.” (Ward, pg. 135)
- b. Called out at the age of 75.
  1. Many are thinking about winding down at this point, so the thought of sojourning would not be all that appealing.
- c. Called out not knowing where he was going.
  1. It won't be until Gen. 13:15 where Abram will have more explained to him about this land.

**B. Lived as a foreigner in tents (vs 9) (Gen. 13:1-6)**

- a. Abraham had been a wealthy man (Gen. 13:2) but was willing to now live in tents. Why? Because God said so.

**C. Looked forward to the city with foundations (vs 10)**

- a. “Looked forward”
  1. The nature of godly faith emphasized again. Being able to see the unseen through the eyes of faith.
- b. “to the city with foundations”
  1. This same city will later be called Mount Zion (12:22)
  2. “foundations” carries with the idea of permanence.
- c. “whose architect and builder is God.”
  1. An eternal city could only be designed and constructed by an eternal God.

**D. Conceived with Sarah at an old age (vs 11-12)**

- a. 2 contrasts are seen in these verses:
  1. Age of Sarah and Abram
    - a. Sarah – “unable to have children, received power to conceive” (vs 11)
    - b. Abraham – “fact, from one as good as dead” (vs 12)
  2. From one came many
    - a. “from one man... came offspring as numerous as the stars and innumerable as the sand” (vs 12)
- b. What we are seeing is that God can make abundant life even out of death. (Rom. 4:19)
  1. In a way, Abraham is like Abel and Enoch. In that through his faith, God was able to transcend death.



**E. Died without physically seeing the promises (vs 13)**

- a. A break in the pattern is now found. Instead of “by faith” we have “in faith” – “these all died in faith.”
  1. Also another mid-way through application section.
- b. In faith we saw them do 3 things:
  1. See the promises from a distance
  2. Greet them
    - a. John 8:56 – “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; **he saw it and was glad.**”
  3. Confess that they were foreigners and temporary residents on this earth.
    - a. This confession from Abraham is best seen when he seeks a burial plot for Sarah.
      - i. Genesis 23:4 – “**I am an alien residing among you.** Give me burial property among you so that I can bury my dead.”
      - b. This is a reality that man will deny, but when we confess it will bring us tremendous clarity and purpose.
- c. This is what we expect from those with faith, those without will give up without being able to have and obtain now. Short-sightedness is the barrier to godly faith.
  1. “As in the author’s previous example (vv. 11-12), faith defies death. Even though the ancestors died, their fate does not nullify their faith, as faith points beyond the grave (v. 19). It triumphs through the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (12:2), whose triumph is shared by his people (2:14-15).” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:13)

**F. Never turned back to where he left (vs 14-15)**

- a. Many would long for their “homeland”, especially when things get hard. (Num. 14:32-34)
- b. Abraham wouldn’t even let his servant go back there, or dance with the thought of his son obtaining a wife from there. (Gen. 24:1-7)
- c. Abraham had opportunities to go back but would not.
  1. In other words, his faith always looked forward, it never drew back.

**G. Desired what was better (vs 16)**

- a. Desire (ὀρέγομαι) - to stretch oneself out in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something. (Strong’s)
- b. What was “better”
  1. The writer has stressed the “better” and “greater” consistently.
    - a. Jesus is better than the **angels** (1:4)
    - b. Jesus is better than **Moses** (3:3)
    - c. Jesus has a better **hope** (7:19)
    - d. Jesus has a better **priesthood** and **covenant** (7:22)

- e. Jesus has better **promises** (8:6)
- f. Jesus has a better **sacrifice** (9:23)
- g. Jesus **blood** speaks better than Abels (12:24)
- 2. How foolish would we have to be to go to anything else?
- c. “Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God”
  - 1. This is what faith is capable of. Not only approving us, but God is not ashamed of us.

#### H. When tested, followed through (vs 17-19) (Gen. 22:1-18)

- a. “he was tested” (vs 17a)
  - 1. Previously the writer referred to Jesus being “tested” (2:17; 4:15)
    - a. So much relevance here for an audience about to be tested and “disciplined” (12:4-11).
  - 2. Godly faith is meant to help us through trial. (James 1:2-4, 12)
- b. “he was offering his one and only son” (vs 17b-18)
  - 1. The CSB chooses this translation instead of the common “only” for μονογενής. This is entirely appropriate.
    - a. “Whereas the LXX concentrates on the emotional difficulty of this trial by referring to Isaac as Abraham's "beloved" son, our author here instead emphasizes the challenge this test represented to Abraham's faith, since Isaac was the only son of his kind (the MT says "your only son whom you love"). The word only (Greek *mongenes*) does not mean "solitary," but has the sense of unique, one-of-a-kind, and thus denotes prominence. Although Abraham had another son through Hagar, Ishmael was not counted as the "son" of Abraham in terms of the promise of God (Gen 21.12).” (McClister, pg. 428)
  - 2. But the emphasis is clear: “he received the promises and yet...”
    - a. Despite being directly told by God that his “numerous” descendants would come through Isaac (Gen. 17:19; 18:14), he still was willing to obey God and trust that he would still deliver on his promises.
    - b. One will next ask, “how is that possible if Isaac is dead?”
- c. “he considered God” (vs 19a)
  - 1. Abraham believed something would happen that he never saw before. He believed God would raise Isaac up from the dead.
    - a. This is best seen in Gen. 22:5 when Abraham told his young men, “Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; **then we’ll come back to you.**”
    - b. Through the eyes of faith, he believes something he has never seen. He took God at his word.
  - 2. Abraham understood something important about faith that this audience desperately needed to understand: God can keep his promises, even in the most of extreme of circumstances, it is simply my job to trust and obey.
- d. “He received him back” (vs 19b)

1. A great reward for the faithful: a resurrection.
2. He received him back “figuratively speaking”.
  - a. “as a type” (NASB)
  - b. The word is παραβολή, same word we have for “parable”.
    - i. “a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition, as of ships in battle” (Strong’s)
  - c. Who are we to throw this story alongside of?
    - i. A picture of God and Jesus is appropriate. Several phrases in the Genesis 22 story parallel with them.

Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22)	God and Jesus
“take now your son, your beloved son” (vs 2, 12, 16)	“you are my beloved son” (Matt. 3:16-17; 17:5)
“you have not withheld your son” (vs 12, 16)	“God did not spare his own son” (Rom. 8:31-32)
“the wood” (vs 3, 6, 7, 9)	“the tree” (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; 1 Pet. 2:24)
“God will provide for himself the lamb” (vs 8, 14)	“Behold, the Lamb of God” (John 1:29)

## VII. Vs 20 – By Faith Isaac

### A. Blessed his sons concerning things to come. (Genesis 27)

- a. The emphasis here on forward looking faith. Having not received the promise himself, he still blesses his sons.
- b. He does not deal with the mishap between Jacob and Esau here, although Esau is brought up in 12:16 unfavorably.
- c. “But in this context, he is singularly occupied with the fact that Isaac’s blessing of his sons concerned the future (Gen 27:27-40). By directing his attention to a distant future, beyond events that might occur in his own or his sons’ lifetime, Isaac also demonstrates a death-defying faith, a faith that provides “the reality of things hoped for” (v. 1).” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:20)

## VIII. Vs 21 – By Faith Jacob

### A. Blessed his sons concerning things to come. (Genesis 48)

- a. Just like Isaac, Jacob did not receive the promises but still blessed his sons.
  1. And just like with Isaac, the writer does not dwell on the tumultuous relationship between the brothers.
- b. Instead he specifically points out that he blessed Joseph’s sons: Ephraim and Manasseh

- c. As he did it “he worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.”
  - 1. LXX says in Gen. 47:31, “And Israel did reverence, leaning on the top of his staff.” (Brenton)
  - 2. Perhaps the writer is emphasizing that through faith, Israel still worshiped his God and was confident of things to come in the future, despite his old age and dying body.

## IX. Vs 22 – By Faith Joseph

### A. Remembered the exodus of the Israelites

- a. He knew and trusted the promises of God for his descendants: this would not be their forever home. His God would take them to the land that was promised.

### B. Gave instructions concerning his bones. (Genesis 50:24-25)

- a. Exodus 13:19 – “Moses **took the bones of Joseph** with him, because Joseph had made the Israelites swear a solemn oath, saying, “God will certainly come to your aid; then you must take my bones with you from this place.””
- b. Joshua 24:32 – “**Joseph’s bones**, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, **were buried at Shechem** in the parcel of land Jacob had purchased from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for a hundred pieces of silver. It was an inheritance for Joseph’s descendants.”
- c. Joseph trusted God’s word so much that he wanted to show his trust even beyond the grave.
- d. “Both Jacob and Joseph insisted on participating, at least symbolically, in the fulfillment of God’s promise to bring his people to their homeland.” (McClister, pg. 434)

## X. Vs 23-28 – By Faith Moses

### A. Started in faith (vs 23)

- a. “Was hidden by his parents for three months... they didn’t fear the king’s edict” (vs 23)
  - 1. Calls to mind the edict from Pharaoh to kill all the baby boys in Exodus 1:15-22
  - 2. But Moses’ parents refused (Exodus 2:1-10). They feared God more than they feared the king. There would be no monarch on earth to convince them that killing their baby is okay.
- b. “Because they saw that the child was **beautiful**” (vs 23b)
  - 1. Stephen uses the same word (ἀστειῖος) to describe Moses.
    - a. Acts 7:20 – “It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was **lovely** in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father’s home.”

### B. Refused to be called Pharaoh’s family (vs 24-28)

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- a. These next several verses carry so much relevance to the audience for the writer. Many of the things they have gone through mirror what Moses went through and chose.
    1. “The original readers of Hebrews had likely faced similar mistreatment that manifested social rejection (see 10:32ff), so the example of Moses would have been highly relevant to them. The social sacrifice involved in becoming a Christian put them in company with the greatest figure of their heritage.” (McClistler, pg. 437)
  - b. 5 things stand out about Moses’ demonstration of faith:
    1. Refused to be called Pharaoh’s family (vs 24)
      - a. At what point did he renounce his inheritance in the house of Pharaoh?
        - i. Possibly when he killed the Egyptian he saw beating a Hebrew. (Exo. 2:11-14)
        - ii. Perhaps this was his idea of beginning a revolution for his people? The only problem – he lacked having God on his side telling him what to do.
        - iii. When that opportunity comes, Moses will eventually seize it.
      2. Chose to suffer with the people of God rather than enjoy sin (vs 25)
        - a. If Moses stayed as an Egyptian he would be submitting himself to:
          - i. Polytheistic idolatry
          - ii. A Pharaoh who was considered the son of a god
          - iii. The rejection of YHWH
          - iv. A pharaoh who ordered the death of his own kinsmen
          - v. A materialistic culture
        - b. Instead, he chose to “suffer”.
          - i. Matthew 5:11-12 – “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. **For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**”
        - c. He would have been giving way to the “passing pleasures of sin”
          - i. Later the Hebrew writer will refer to sin as “that which so easily entangles us.” (12:1)
          - ii. The sin that Egypt offered was only temporary, Moses was looking forward to something greater.
          - iii. Moses cherished a relationship with God and his family above any kind of relationship with Pharaoh and his family.
            - a. Unfortunately, Egypt would go on to become a picture of a past life of sin that Israel keeps wanting to go back to. (Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:5-6; 14:3-4; Isa. 36:6; Ezek. 29:1-6)
      3. Considered reproach for the sake of Christ to be greater wealth (vs 26)
        - a. The same point made concerning Abraham in 11:16
        - b. The riches of Egypt were great (Gen. 12:10; 42:2; 43:2)

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- c. But Moses found the “reproach for the sake of Christ” the be “greater”. What does this mean?
  - i. The reproach Moses suffered was *like* that of Christ
    - a. Other translations say the *disgrace* of Christ (NIV)
    - b. The idea of giving up a life of ease and comfort for the sake of God’s people.
  - ii. To what extent did Moses understand the Messianic age? I do not know.
    - a. But a type/anti-type can certainly be seen. In the same way Christ left the glories of heaven to come down here to dwell with us and show us out of slavery, Moses did the same.
- 4. Left Egypt behind (vs 27)
  - a. This verse gets to the “why”. Why would Moses do this?
    - i. He was not afraid of the king’s anger.
      - a. Likely referring to the Exodus. The plagues had demonstrated that God is to be feared far more than this Pharaoh.
    - ii. He persevered as one who sees him who is invisible.
      - a. This calls us back to vs 1 of the chapter.
      - b. Moses made his decision based solely off of what God had said, not what he had seen.
- 5. Kept the Passover (vs 28)
  - a. Two ways keeping this newly instituted Passover would demonstrate faith:
    - i. Faith that God would do it.
      - a. This would seem uncharacteristic of God, but Moses knew God was true to his word. Even if it meant judgment and wrath.
    - ii. Faith that spreading blood on a door post would keep first-borns safe.
      - a. This would be a new idea to the people of God: sacrificing an animal so that your blood does not get shed.

## XI. Vs 29-30 – By Faith the Israelites

### A. Crossed the Red Sea (vs 29) (Exodus 14:21-31)

- a. “as though they were on dry land”
  - 1. This would have been quite the crossing.
    - a. Exodus 12:37- “The Israelites traveled from Rameses to Succoth, **about six hundred thousand able-bodied men on foot, besides their families.**”
  - 2. This would have taken tremendous faith to not turn back. To trust that this water will stay up, and the ground dry.
- b. “When the Egyptians attempted to do this, they were drowned.”
  - 1. What was the difference for the Egyptians? They had no trust in God. They were destroyed.

2. In other words, the writer is emphasizing: no faith in God = no salvation.
3. But the Israelites learned an important lesson that day: God will deliver them and crush their enemies behind them. But they needed to trust him.

### B. Marched around the walls of Jericho (vs 30) (Joshua 6)

- a. What correlation would there be for marching around a city 13 times total over the course of 7 days have to do with it's walls falling down?
  1. Normally a cities walls are taken down by weeks or months of laying siege to that place.
  2. But it is here where we see their faith demonstrated. They took God at his word, and it would be the only way for them to get all the way through to the promised land.

## XII. Vs 31 – By Faith Rahab the Prostitute

### A. Welcomed the spies in peace (vs 31) (Joshua 2, 6)

- a. Rahab's declaration of faith in Joshua 2:8-13 tells us why she was willing to do this.
  1. Joshua 2:9 - "I know that the LORD has given you this land"
  2. Joshua 2:10 - "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea"
  3. Joshua 2:12 - "For the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below."
  4. Although she had not seen anything to believe this, through faith she did.
- b. Rahab's faith produced works (James 2:24-26)
- c. Rahab was alone in her faith.
  1. Joshua 5:1 - "When all the Amorite kings across the Jordan to the west and all the Canaanite kings near the sea heard how the LORD had dried up the water of the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, **they lost heart and their courage failed because of the Israelites.**"
  2. And yet we are only told of Rahab humbling herself before the Lord by faith.
- d. Rahab had unexpected faith.
  1. "Rahab the **prostitute**"
    - a. πόρνη - "a woman who sells her body for sexual uses" (Strong's)
    - b. The last person someone would expect to have faith in God, and yet she does.
- e. Rahab's faith changed her.
  1. We will find her in the genealogy of our Lord. (Matt. 1:5-6)
    - a. By our faith, God can work through even the worse circumstances that we have gotten ourselves into.

- b. 1 Corinthians 10:13 – “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. **But God is faithful**; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to bear it. “

### **XIII. Vs 32-38 – By Faith “\_\_\_\_\_”**

#### **A. “Time is too short for me to tell...”**

- a. Possibly an indication that this was to be read before the whole church, or at the very least was a manuscript of some sermons preached.
1. “The previous three examples were given only a brief description, and now only the names are listed. Claiming insufficient time, yet mentioning the subject, is a known rhetorical device, and it creates the impression of countless examples passing in review at breathtaking speed. In this way, the author is building up to his exhortation in 12:1, evoking “a great cloud of witnesses.”” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:32)
  2. “At this point the list of examples changes from a list with short narratives to a summary list of names and experiences, a style similar in some ways to a genealogy. One reason that the author could relate or describe these stories in detail was because “time will run out” if he did so. The phrase was a common rhetorical clue to an audience that the speaker was going to condense the following material, which reflects that Hebrews was read to the congregation, probably in one sitting. But there is another discernible reason for why the example list changes here. It is probably because getting into the land of rest is the assumed goal behind the exhortations in Hebrews (recall chs 3-4), and the example list has now reached that point in Israel's history.” (McClister, pg. 446)

#### **B. Gideon (vs 32) (Judges 6-8)**

- a. An army of 32,000 strong cut down to only 300.
1. The point: by faith, God can go very far with only a little.

#### **C. Barak (vs 32) (Judges 4-5)**

- a. Barak was commissioned by Deborah to go and take out the Canaanites.
1. Another woman arrives in the story: Jael, who drives a tent-peg into Sisera’s head.
- b. The point: even in a time where women seemed to be taking lead, by faith, God was able to accomplish his purposes.

#### **D. Samson (vs 32) (Judges 13-16)**

- a. Although he starts off promising, things go downhill for him fast:
1. Requests a wife from among the Philistines
  2. Sleeps with a harlot
  3. Gets involved with another Philistine woman
  4. Gives up his power and is blinded



5. Is humiliated in front of the Philistines
6. Died a tragic death
- b. The point: even through character flaws, God's strength can still be seen.

**E. Jephthah (vs 32) (Judges 11-12)**

- a. Although the son of a harlot, by faith, Jephthah is raised up and delivers the Israelites from the Ammonites.

**F. David (vs 32)**

- a. What stories of faith could fit in here?
  1. David and Goliath
  2. David's surviving through Saul's attempts on his life
  3. David's successes as a military commander and warrior against foreign armies
  4. Through faults of his own, by faith, seeks forgiveness and remains loyal to God
  5. Sees the downfall of his family because of his sin
  6. Living through the attempted coup of Absalom
- b. The point: through all of these trials one thing got David through: trust in his God.
  1. The Psalms would demonstrate this as well.

**G. Samuel (vs 32)**

- a. Given to God from a young age (1 Samuel 1-3)
  1. Sees the Ark stolen
  2. Saul appointed as king then fail
- b. The point: any leadership he gave Israel was by faith in God.

**H. The prophets (vs 32)**

- a. Elijah? Elisha? Ezekiel? Jeremiah? Isaiah? Hosea? Amos?
- b. A hard job, one that could only be done "by faith".

**I. By faith they... (vs 33-38)**

- a. Conquered kingdoms
  1. Those he listed in vs 32 certainly apply.
- b. Performed acts of righteousness
  1. Thinking about what was said of David during his reign.
    - a. 2 Samuel 8:15 – "So David reigned over all Israel, **administering justice and righteousness** for all his people."
- c. Obtained promises
  1. A call back to vs 13-16
- d. Shut the mouths of lions

1. Most certainly a reference to Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6:6-18)
  2. Daniel 6:23 – “The king was overjoyed and gave orders to take Daniel out of the den. **When Daniel was brought up from the den, he was found to be unharmed, for he trusted in his God.**”
- e. Quenched the power of fire
1. Still reflecting on the story of Daniel, but with his 3 friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (Daniel 3:19-30)
- f. Escaped the edge of the sword
1. David in his countless battles.
  2. Elijah and Elisha with their encounters with evil men.
  3. Maybe even the days of Esther when she saved her people.
- g. From weakness were made strong
1. Many of the stories from the conquest, judges, and the Kings illustrate this.
- h. Became mighty in war
1. All those listed in vs 32.
- i. Put foreign armies to flight
1. All those listed in vs 32.
- j. Women received back their dead by resurrection.
1. An appropriate reference to the resurrection promised in Jesus.
  2. But specifically thinking about the powerful prayers that raised the dead from both Elisha and Elijah. (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37)
- k. Other people were tortured, not accepting release
1. Maybe referencing the time of the Maccabean revolt and the martyrs of that day.
- l. Experienced mockings, scourgings, chain, and imprisonment
1. “A recurring theme in Hebrews is the fact that God's people have to suffer shame and humiliation (6:6; 10:33; 11:25-26; 13:13).” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:36)
  2. Jesus said of his own suffering, “and they will **mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him, and he will rise after three days.**” (Mark 10:34)
  3. Of his own disciples Jesus will say, “Beware of them, because they will hand you over to local courts and **flog you in their synagogues.**” (Matt. 10:17)
- m. Stoned
1. Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest (2 Chron. 24:20-21)
  2. Stephen would come to their minds, especially if this is the Jerusalem brethren. (Acts 8:58-60)
- n. Sawn in two
1. Traditionally said to be Isaiah in Jewish tradition. (Lives of the Prophets 1:1)
- o. They were put to death with the sword
1. Said of Uriah

- a. Jeremiah 26:23 – “They brought Uriah out of Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, **who executed him with the sword** and threw his corpse into the burial place of the common people.”
- 2. Elijah references the prophets who were slain with the sword. (1 Kings 19:10)
- 3. Also the apostle James, fresh on the minds of Jerusalem Christians. (Acts 12:1-2)
- p. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins
  - 1. An association with “hairy garments” and the prophets. Denoting a time of wandering and not much comfort for these men. (Zech. 13:4)
  - 2. “This attire is “an indication of their antithesis to the world, of their need and affliction, of their lonely life in the desert and mountains.”” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:37)
- q. Were destitute, afflicted, and ill-treated.
  - 1. Many examples that have already come to mind would also be in view here.
- r. “the world was not worthy of them” (vs 38)
  - 1. Perhaps a parenthetical, but here to state what we are all thinking: these people endured in a world that would be hard to live in. They truly were the “salt of the earth” in their days.
  - 2. Naturally, the world would not appreciate such commitment and trust to God.
- s. Wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground
  - 1. These examples also made the “confession” that they were stranger and pilgrims (11:13). Not just with their mouth, but by their actions.

#### **XIV. Vs 39-40 – Approved by Faith**

##### **A. “but they did not receive what was promised” (vs 39)**

- a. This gets back to his entire argument of what the eyes of faith will do: go an entire life time of trusting God and taking him at his word despite ever receiving his promises in this life.
  - 1. As was stated in 11:13-16
- b. Many of these examples died horrific deaths. Why would they be willing to do that?

##### **B. “since God had provided something better for us” (vs 40a)**

- a. They understood that God’s ultimate fulfillment of his promises was still to come.
  - 1. His use of the word “better” here makes a profound point: that even these examples new that something “better” was to come.
    - a. If these Jewish forerunners of faith knew that, then we should too.
- b. Why did God do it that way?

##### **C. “so that they would not be made perfect without us”**

- a. “In Hebrews, to be made complete means to have an unimpaired relationship with God, to have been set free from guilt (9:14; 10:22), and to enjoy unrestricted access to God (4:16; cf. 7:25; 10:22). The consummation of this relationship takes place in the heavenly city (11:10, 16), in the company of all God’s people. This city will appear in the future (13:14; cf. 11:10, 16), and yet, believers have already reached it (12:22).” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 11:40)

#### IV. Faith Has Been Perfected (12:1-3)

These 3 verses are what all these examples ultimately point to. For as great as this cloud of witnesses is, the writer will call on us to “consider Him”. Faith, endurance, and drawing near to God are all seen in the example of our Lord. He is our chief motivation and compass for how to be faithful to God. He is the reason we can endure.

##### Vs 1a – Therefore...

###### A. “Since we also have a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us”

- a. Such vivid imagery to think about those in chapter 11 surrounding us like a cloud.
  1. This word “surrounding” (περίκειμαι) also seen in Mark 9:42 and Luke 17:2 where Jesus said, “it would be better for him if a millstone were **hung** around his neck”.
    - a. Here these faithful men and women of God surround us, hang around our necks, to cheer us onward in our journey.
    - b. And so we sing:  
 “As saints of old still line the way,  
 Retelling triumphs of His grace,  
 We hear their calls and hunger for the day  
 When, with Christ, we stand in glory” (O Church, Arise, Getty and Townsend)
- b. **This cloud of witnesses includes our own people of whom “the world was not worthy”.**
  1. Thoughts of our own faithful brethren who have gone on before us ought to come to mind.
    - a. Hebrews 13:7 – “Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s word to you. **As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.**”

##### Vs 1b – Let us lay aside

###### A. “Every hindrance”

1. ὄγκος – “whatever is prominent, protuberance, bulk, mass” (Strong’s)
  - a. It is fair to say we have a lot of “masses” that stand in our way in this race. It is time to lay them aside.
  - b. Reminds me of the weeds that choke out fruitfulness (Mark 4:18-19)

B. “And the **sin** that so easily ensnares us”

1. Aside from the hindrances that distract us, there is also deliberate sin.
2. The Hebrew writer has emphasized this as the barrier to godly faithfulness. (3:12-17; 10:26; 12:4)

## Vs 1c – Let us run

### A. The Christian Race

1. “The imagery of a race (Greek *agon*, an athletic contest; recalling a similar term from 10.32), creates a picture of Christians running the course of faith (Acts 20.24; 2 Tim 4.7) that is ahead of them, with past heroes of the faith in the grandstands cheering them on. 1° The idea of a race with a finish line in the distance before, or in front of, us suits well the picture of a faith that is forward-looking and that requires determination.” (McClister, pg. 467)
2. Many commentators will expound on the historical relevance this imagery has. Citing infamous races in Olympia, Athens, Rome, Tyre, Laodicea, Pergamum, Ephesus, Priene, Miletus, Aphrodisias, Perge, and Sardis,

### B. “with endurance”

1. The writer has emphasized the necessity of endurance to his readers. (10:32-36)
2. Any good runner knows this is the key to not just running well, but finishing the race.

## Vs 2 – Keep our eyes on Jesus

### A. “Keep our eyes on Jesus”

- a. He is the one we measure ourselves against (Eph. 4:13).
- b. 4 things about him the writer tells us to fixate our eyes on:
  1. The Pioneer
    - a. “author” (NASB, NKJV), “founder” (ESV)
    - b. Same word in 2:10, “For in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was entirely appropriate that God — for whom and through whom all things exist — should make **the pioneer** of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”
    - c. We look to his example for how to navigate this race. (2:17-18; 4:14-16)
  2. The Perfecter
    - a. He is the one who “completed” the race, never having tripped up.
    - b. Think of him as the perfecter leads us to think of how each example in chapter 11 ultimately points to Christ.
      - i. See “**Jesus in Hebrews 11**” appendix A
  3. The one who looked ahead
    - a. “for the joy that lay before him”

- i. Again, a theme in these later chapters. A forward-looking faith.
- b. “he endured the cross”
  - i. A reading of the crucifixion account from start to finish helps us see the endurance it would take. Roman crucifixion was certainly cruel and unusual punishment.
- c. “despising the shame”
  - i. Roman crucifixion had one purpose: shame the guilty
  - ii. “This word (Greek *kataphroneō*) is translated "despised" in several of the English versions. However, in Greek, to despise does not necessarily carry with it the strong negative connotations of hatred or contempt that the word has in modern English usage. It normally has the milder sense of "to disregard" or "to think little or nothing" of something. It is as when we say that something is "no big deal." This is the attitude that Jesus had toward the shame and rejection that reached its apex in his death on the cross. He did not consider it something that should hinder him or cause him to live otherwise, nor should his followers.” (McClister, pg. 470)
- 4. The one who sat down
  - a. “at the right hand of the throne of God”
    - i. The writer brings to our mind the idea of exaltation. (Phil. 2:5-11)
    - ii. The fulfillment of Psalm 110:1
    - iii. The readers, like Jesus, are being asked to suffer in anticipation for an exaltation into God’s presence.

### Vs 3 – Consider Him

#### A. “Who endured such hostility from sinners against himself”

- a. So much relevance to the audience who has already experienced this once before (10:32-34)
- b. Consider his flogging, being spat upon, beaten, and mocked (Mark 15:15-20). And yet, “He **did not commit sin**, and no deceit was found in his mouth; when he was insulted, **he did not insult in return**; when he suffered, **he did not threaten** but **entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.**” (1 Peter 2:22-24)

#### B. “So that you won’t grow weary and give up”

- a. As has clearly been stated: Jesus did this as an example for us.
- b. The writer’s call has been to “not draw back” (10:39) but to “draw near” (10:22).
- c. Giving up is not an option.
- d. “The heart that does not fill itself with the example of Jesus will eventually lose strength (because there is no strength for perseverance otherwise; 2 Thes 2.16f; 3.3; 1 Pet 5.10) and will become an evil heart of unbelief (3.12) that falls away from its commitment to the Lord.” (McClister, pg. 472)

## V. Faith Suffers Purposefully (12:4-13)

This final section is a continuation from the suffering the writer referenced in vs 3. There will be some fundamental things about suffering that the audience will need to understand. Namely, that suffering is something the Lord uses to discipline us for greater faithfulness and discipleship. The focus goes from the Son to the Father.

### Vs 4-8 – The Lord disciplines the one he loves

#### A. “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding you blood” (vs 4)

- a. “If the statement is taken in a purely metaphorical sense, the author is criticizing the audience for their poor effort and their unwillingness to suffer for the cause. A boxer cannot surrender even before the opponent has drawn blood. It is likely, however, that the reference to the shedding of blood reflects the kind of persecution to which the audience has been subjected. They have been “made to be a public spectacle of scorn and oppression” (10:33). They had lost their possessions and some of them had been jailed (10:34). Apparently, none of them had yet had to suffer serious violence or death for the sake of their faith.” (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 12:4)
- b. Essentially, he is saying, “there is still plenty left in the tank, don’t give up now.”
  1. Also it brings to mind the shedding of Jesus’ blood to the point of death.

#### B. “You have forgotten” (vs 5-6)

- a. The exhortation from Proverbs 3:11-12 gives 2 instructions:
  1. Don’t dismiss or lose heart when the Lord disciplines us. (vs 5)
  2. Because it shows how much he loves us (vs 6)

#### C. “Endure suffering as discipline” (vs 7)

- a. Suffering is supposed to mold us.

#### D. “God is dealing with you as sons” (vs 7b-8)

- a. This is where we see best the parent/child imagery with God. Not only in the teaching, guidance, and provision he gives, but also in this discipline we receive.
  1. If he doesn’t discipline us then we are “illegitimate children and not sons”.
- b. God’s discipline shows his great love and concern for us.
  1. James 1:12 – “Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that **God has promised to those who love him.**”

### Vs 9-11 – The Results of Godly Discipline

- A. Godly discipline is supposed to bring forth results. 3 things are mentioned here:
  - a. **Respect and submission (vs 9)**

1. Grindheim sees a chiasm here (Grindheim, comments on Hebrews 12:9):
    - A – Fathers of the Flesh
    - B – We respected fathers of the flesh
    - B’ – We submit to the Father of Spirits
    - A’ – Father of Spirits
  2. Instead of fighting against suffering and trial, we need to endure through it.
- b. Share in his holiness (vs 10)**
1. “based off of what seemed good to them”
    - i. As human fathers we don’t often get this right. But for the Father of spirits, he gets it right every time.
  2. “he does it for our benefit, so that we can share in his holiness”
    - i. This is what it is all about. Discipline is to “drive out foolishness” (Prov. 22:15)
    - ii. When it is driven out, it helps us to draw near to a holy God.
- c. Yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness (vs 11)**
1. “no discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful”
    - i. This is definitely what these brethren have felt and will feel. But when we endure through suffering, we later see what it was doing for us.
  2. “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”
    - i. When we discipline our own children we ought to do so with a purpose.
    - ii. Proverbs 29:15 – “A rod of correction imparts wisdom”
    - iii. And so it is with God, discipline imparts wisdom and righteousness.
  3. “to those who have been trained by it”
    - i. This final condition is key: discipline will only work if we will open our hearts and mind to the correction and training it offers.

## Vs 12-13 – Get Stronger

- A. His final admonition for suffering calls the brethren to get stronger. There are 3 ways to do this:
- a. Strengthen (vs 12)**
1. “your tired hands and weakened knees”
    - i. Some see Isaiah 35:3 in here.
    - ii. This race is not meant to be ran alone, but together. When one member of the body hurts, the whole body feels it.
    - iii. 1 Corinthians 12:26 – “**So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it;** if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”
- b. Make straight paths (vs 13a)**
1. “make straight paths for your feet”



- i. Why would we make things difficult for ourselves in this race? It is time to “lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us.” (12:1)
- ii. “The tracks to which our author refers are the ruts in the ground left by chariots and wagons (still visible in places where old Roman roads survive). Repeated wear had the effect of creating a path that a wheeled vehicle would naturally and easily follow. In Biblical thought, the phrase. make straight tracks became an image of following what was right and leading a good moral life. Cf. Proverbs 3.6; 4.26. It has the sense of following the path that leads straight to the goal, without taking any deviation from it.” (McClister, pgs. 484-485)
- iii. For us as teachers, our job is to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15 NKJV)
  - a. “Wuest says, “'Rightly dividing' is *orthotomeo*, from *temno*, 'to cut,' and *orthos*, 'straight,' the compound verb meaning 'to cut straight.' Moulton and Milligan suggest that it might be a metaphor derived from the stone mason's art of cutting stones fair and straight to fit into their place in a building.” (Patton, pg. 194)

### c. Heal up (vs 13b)

1. “So that what is lame may not be dislocated but be healed instead.”
  - i. These words remind me of Jesus’ instruction to “cut off our right hand if it causes us to sin.” (Matt. 5:30)
  - ii. The point being that if we don’t get rid of the things causing us to stumble and run the race, then we will not get to the finish line.
  - iii. If we want to run the race with endurance, we need to get rid of selfish habits so our bodies can heal up and work effectively.

## Applications

- I. Biblical faith could look forward to God’s promises and deliverance, despite what may seem like contradictory evidence in the present.
  - a. Do we make decisions based off of the promises? Or off of what is seen?
  - b. Do we take God at his word?
- II. Faith is something that builds on itself.
  - a. The example of Abraham illustrates this well. God first called on him to leave his country behind, not to sacrifice his son.
- III. The faith of one man can have a large impact.
  - a. Thinking again of the example in Abraham (11:12). How much impact can we have on future generations from a single lifetime of faithfulness?

- IV. We must confess that we are foreigners and temporary residents of this earth. (11:13)
- a. And yet how often do we find ourselves trying to make this earth our inheritance?
  - b. Are we looking for a city whose architect and builder is God? (11:10)
  - c. Looking forward to something “better”?
  - d. Are we looking to “turn back”?
- V. We must draw near (10:22) not draw back (10:39)
- VI. Have we left “Egypt” or sin behind? What have we given up for Jesus? (11:27)
- VII. Are we willing to face ill-treatment for Christ? (11:26)
- VIII. Have we crossed the Red Sea by faith? (11:29; 1 Cor. 10:1-5)
- IX. What would our Hebrews 11:33-38 look like?
- X. We must keep our eyes on Jesus if we want to finish this race. (12:1-3)
- XI. Allow Godly discipline to have its perfect result. (12:4-11)

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### Appendix A - Jesus in Hebrews 11

<b>OT Character</b>	<b>By Faith</b>	<b>Consider Jesus</b>
<b>We</b>	Creation	Jesus created all
<b>Abel</b>	Better sacrifice	Jesus' blood (12:24)
<b>Enoch</b>	Taken up	Jesus' ascension
<b>Noah</b>	Built ark	Jesus' baptism
<b>Abraham</b>	Left/pilgrim	Jesus' incarnation
<b>Sarah</b>	Conceived	Jesus' birth and resurrection
<b>Abraham</b>	Offered Isaac	Jesus' sacrifice
<b>Isaac/Jacob</b>	Blessings	Jesus' deliverance
<b>Moses</b>	Hidden	Jesus hidden in Egypt
<b>Moses</b>	Gave up royalty	Jesus left heaven
<b>Moses</b>	Kept Passover	Jesus is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7)
<b>People</b>	Crossed red sea	Jesus' deliverance
<b>Walls</b>	Fell down	Jesus' triumph (2 Cor. 2:14-16)
<b>Rahab</b>	Protected/saved	Jesus' protection

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## Pursue Peace ... and Holiness

*Roger Polanco*

Text: Hebrews 12:14-13:25

### Hebrews 12:14-17:Pursue peace & Esau

- **Hebrews 12:14:Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**
  - The word pursue indicates effort. We will not be at peace with all men by accident. Pursue implies initiative; if we are going to be at peace with all men then we are going to have to take the first step. God, in order to make peace with us, took the first step (see 1 John 4:19) And God gave the ultimate effort to make peace with us by sacrificing this son for us. (see John 3:16) We are called to do the same for others.
  - Let's remember that these Christians have been experiencing hostility from others, yet they cannot respond with hostility. They must pursue peace with all.
  - Remember Rom. 12:18:If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
  - Peace with all men is not the only thing we pursue. We also pursue sanctification. Holiness or sanctification won't happen by accident. We must pursue it, we must give our best effort.
  - In Hebrews 12:10: the writer makes the point that "He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in his holiness". God wants us to be holy like he is holy so he disciplines us so that we would share in his holiness. Disciplining us to make us holy is God's part, our part is to pursue it. Both are necessary.
  - When we practice this verse we are demonstrating the two greatest commandments: Love for God and love for our neighbor.
  - This verse teaches us that sanctification, which has the idea of being set apart, should never lead us to be separatists. Instead, God wants us to live life around people. At the same time, our continual interaction with and around people should not lead us to compromise our holiness. It is hard to balance these two ideas, but it is what God has always called his people to do. Also, Jesus did it beautifully.
  - Additionally, we also see in this verse the two ideas coexisting: two beatitudes of Jesus, which happened to have been spoken back to back are:
    - Matthew 5:9:Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
    - Matthew 5:10:"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- **Hebrews 12:15:See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;**
  - See to it: be watchful. You are responsible for not falling away
    - We need to be watchful for ourselves and for others (see Heb. 3:12) that they don't lose out on their salvation
  - Come short of the grace of God

- 
- In hebrews 4:1 the writer warns us not come short of the rest that God has reserved for us. Here he tells us not to come short of the grace of God. Heaven is the ultimate demonstration of the grace of God.
  - We think God is gracious to us now for saving us from our sins (and it is). How much more when we get to our final rest. That is when we will really know just how good God is.
  - No root of bitterness springing up causes troubles
    - This phrase is almost word for word Deut. 29:18
      - Deut. 29:18:so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.
      - Is the writer referring here to bitterness towards God? The fact that this verse is almost a word for word quotation of Deut. 29:18 makes me think of bitterness against God since that's the point in that passage. If this is the case the writer of hebrews is teaching us to deal with that bitterness because it can lead us to falling away, and when we fall away it may lead to many in the body being defiled. My own lack of faithfulness will eventually effect others.
      - If the bitterness here is towards others- for example, if I'm bitter towards my brother and sister because life is hard and it creates stress, the writer is telling me to deal with that bitterness otherwise it will damage the body.
      - Root implies deep within. If we don't deal with our bitterness toward God or others, sooner or later the tree will spring up and the fruit will defile or poison others. Let's get the root out before the tree comes up.
  - **Hebrews 12:16:that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.**
    - That there be no immoral or godless person like Esau
      - The word immoral here is later used in Heb. 13:4 talking about fornication. The sexually immoral is shortsighted like Esau. Esau thought only of the moment and the fornicator does the same.
      - Godless: What a strong statement. Why does the writer of the book of hebrews see Esau in such a bad light? Esau is totally opposed to all the Hebrew writer is trying to encourage in his readers. The writer in this book is trying to encourage patience and waiting. Esau is characterized by haste and impatience. The writer is trying to encourage his readers to put their eyes on what you cannot see, but Esau saw only what was visible.
    - Esau: He is a physical son of Isaac (and therefore Abraham) but not the promised son (see also Gal. 4:22-23). The book of Hebrews is being written to Christians of a Jewish background. He is telling them (by using Esau as an example) that it is not good enough to be a physical descendant of Abraham; you need to be the descendant that inherits the promise like Jacob.
    - Sold his own birthright for a single meal
      - The writer of Hebrews sees the birthright and the inheriting of the blessing as the same thing (see Heb. 12:17).
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- The book of Genesis makes it look like two different things (see Genesis 27:36)
  - The idea here is that it could have been Abraham, Issac and Esau, but he gave all of this up for in a moment because of hunger, hardship and desperation.
  - Single meal: emphasis on the disproportional nature of what he did. All of the blessings for one meal. But what about us? Will we trade our blessings for a moment online, for a moment with a woman, for a small amount of comfort? Think about the vast blessing rather than the single meal.
- **Hebrews 12:17: For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.**
    - Even afterward
      - After the moment of hunger passed he wanted the blessing back but it was too late.
      - The writer is emphasizing the regret the christian will feel if they sell out the blessing for a moment of comfort. Don't think about the moment of discomfort think about the later regret
      - We are firstborn (heb. 12:23) don't sell your birthright.
    - For he found no place of repentance
      - The writer of Hebrews often talks about the idea that once you make a decision, that decision cannot be undone. In heb. 6:6 he talks about those that have "fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance". In heb. 10:26 he speaks of those who "go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins". The point the writer is making by giving the example of Esau and others is that there is a place or point in time of no return. This often happens when our hearts are so hardened by sin that we don't want to repent. In our case if we die having sold our birthright, we will find no mercy from God and will have all eternity to regret our choice. The tears shed at that time will not change our reality- just as it didn't for Esau.

### **Hebrews 12:18-29: For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched**

- **Hebrews 12:18 For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,**
  - For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched
    - The word mountain is not in the original text even though the idea of the mountain is implied. I note this because the Hebrew writer is emphasizing to christians that they have not come to something physical like mount Sinai. The nature of the blessings the christians have are of a spiritual rather than a tangible nature. (see Heb. 12:22-24)
    - Throughout the book of Hebrews the writer has been making the point that the blessings the christian has are spiritual. He has contrasted this to the physical nature of the blessings the Jewish nation has. The Jews had a City, temple, priesthood, and great gathering that they could see and touch. I imagine the Jews mocked the christians saying, "look at our city, temple, priesthood, what do you have to show?" The physical nature of these blessings would have tempted these christian to go back to Judaism, therefore the writer has emphasized that we have a priesthood and a



temple that cannot be seen but is just as real.

- Hebrews 12:18-21: is a clear description of Mount Sinai (see Ex. 19:16-25). Think about how significant mount Sinai is in biblical history. It was at Mount Sinai that they saw a physical manifestation of God. There on that mountain God spoke to them the 10 commandments. It was at Sinai that they inaugurated the covenant, the priesthood was established, and the tabernacle was built. They were on Sinai from Ex. 19, until numbers 11:11; that's a large portion of the Old testament. The Israelites would have been proud of this mountain. This was the place where they met God. I also imagine them telling Christians, "we have mount Sinai, what do you have? Have you Christians had such an experience as ours?" Again this would have tempted the hearers to return to Judaism. The writer will go on to say that we have a much more significant experience than even what they had at Mount Sinai.
- in the same way, people today leave humble christianity searching after a Sinai Experience; they search for a physical experience in which they can 'meet with God' not knowing that in Christ they have undergone something much more profound.
- **Hebrews 12:19-21: and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. (20)For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED." (21)And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."**
  - The Mount Sinai experience was awesome.
    - Blast of a trumpet: Mount Sinai was loud.
    - Sound of words:
      - See Ex. 20:19 "Let not God speak to us or we will die.
      - Deut. 5:25-26: this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die. (26)For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?
  - Moses said "I am full of fear and trembling"
    - Moses, who had seen the 10 plagues and the opening of the Red Sea, was in awe of what he saw and heard.
    - The Mount Sinai experience was truly the pinnacle of any spiritual experience in the old Testament, but the writer is now saying that we have something more incredible found in humble following of Christ. Today many are tempted to leave the humble and simplistic following of Christ for a louder and more ostentatious experience. Particularly in the religious world, the louder the presentation, the more they believe God is present. This is why we often seek out a concert-like experience in order to feel near to God. Nothing would have been louder than Sinai, and yet the writer insists that we have something better. Today people are seeking sounds of words. We hear people saying, "God speak to me, I hear the voice of God" and we are tempted to join those groups because we want to audibly hear the voice of God as well. No voice from God was more loud and clear than at Sinai. Such was the voice that Moses was full of fear and trembling from. And yet, the Hebrew writer is telling us that in Christ, and humble Christianity, we have obtained something better.

- **Hebrews 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,**
  - But you have come
    - The Hebrew writer is saying to christians that they ‘come to’ something as well. They don’t have to be envious of what the jews have had or have experienced, because they have come to something too. Not something like that physical mountain or anything of this creation, but to something of a spiritual nature. We don’t have to envy the physical experiences of others in the religious world, all we have to do is open up our eyes to what we have. So what is it that we have come to?
  - Mount Zion.
    - Mount Zion is first mentioned in 2 sam.5:7. When David captures Jerusalem from the Jebusites in 2 sam. 5:7 its called the stronghold of Zion, the city of David. I think it is right for us to conclude that Jerusalem was on a mountain and that that mountain was called Zion. Zion was God’s special mountain because that’s where He and his temple were (see psalm 9:11). It was the Mountain of the King (see Psalm 2:6). The Jews were proud of Zion so many of the psalms reference this. It was the special and sacred place where God dwelt. In Isaiah 2:2, Isaiah speaks about the time of the messiah as the Mountain of the house of the Lord being established and being the chief of the mountains. I think the writer is saying that Mount Sinai and the physical Mount Zion were shadows of the Spiritual one. In Christ we have come to the fulfillment of all the mountains. In Christ we have come to the Most Holy and Sacred of places. I recently read an article about the world’s largest religious gathering. It is called The Great Pitcher Festival, and this year they are expecting approximately 420 million people. This is about 200 times the numbers of Muslims who pilgrim to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Why do these 420 million people go to this festival in Northern India? Why do the muslims take that pilgrimage to Mecca? Why did Jewish people pilgrim to Jerusalem or Zion? They all share a similar hope; they are hoping for a religious experience as a means to meet God. In the case of 420 million who attend that festival, they will dip in a sacred river where they hope to receive divine blessing. The writer of Hebrews is saying that in Christ, we have come to the greatest of Mountains, but we have to have faith to see it. What we are experiencing in Christ is more significant than Mount Sinai- the greatest of physical divine experiences. We have come to the Mountains of Mountains, to the Mecca of Meccas, to the Most Sacred River we could ever dip in.
  - The City of the Living God
    - The writer is saying you are part of a city too; not the city of David, but of the living God. The theme of christians having a heavenly city is prominent in the last 3 chapters of hebrews. In Hebrews 11:10 father Abraham accepted the difficulties of living in tents because “he was looking for a city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God”. Abraham was not the only one who was looking for a heavenly city because in hebrews 11:16 the writer says that all the men and women of faith “desired a better country, that is, a heavily one” and states that God has prepared a city for them. In Hebrews 13:14 the writer calls christians to go outside the city with Jesus. Why would I leave the comfort, safety, security, and acceptance of the city? The writer reminds us that “we are seeking the city which is to come”. So as Christians we are not disappointed because we don’t get to be a part of an earthly city since we are already part of the biggest and brightest city.

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- The heavenly Jerusalem
    - The heavenly Jerusalem is just another name of the City of the living God. Interestingly enough Paul in Gal. 4:26 contrasts the heavenly Jerusalem above to Mount Sinai.
    - In Rev. 3:12 & 21:3 being part of the New Jerusalem is a promise to the one who overcomes.
    - Don't be so worried about being part of the earthly Jerusalem. Make sure you are part of the heavenly one.
  - Myriads of angels
    - Myriads has the idea of a number that can't be counted. We would say millions of angels
    - There were angels on mount sinai (Acts 7:38).
    - Revelation 5:11 talks about there being millions of angels around the throne of God.
    - The writer is saying that we christians have angels also; millions of them. We don't have to envy the Mount Sinai experience as if we don't have angels. In today's religious climate, many speak and boast about the angels they see, hear, and touch. In Christ we have come to millions of them.
  - **Hebrews 12:23: to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,**
    - General assembly
      - Thayer defines this expression as “a festal gathering of the whole people to celebrate public games or other solemnities”. The second definition is “a public festal assembly”.
      - In Acts 7:38 the people that came to Mount Sinai are described as an assembly of people in the wilderness.
      - The expression “general assembly” makes me think about the great gathering or assembling of people that would have taken place during feast days (Passover, Pentecost, Feast of booths).
      - I can see the Jews telling the Christians, “look at our assemblies” or “Look at our gathering,” mocking Christian assemblies as being ridiculous and inferior.
      - The Hebrew writer is telling christians, “you are part of a great assembly too; not a physical one but a spiritual one”. This is a truth that we must keep in the forefront of our mind because false assemblies call to and attract us. Being part of a large assembly, or a large group of people often brings with it a feeling of validation (think of the Catholic Church in the Vatican or even liberal Christian churches who have their annual reunions). These large gatherings put great effort into perpetuating the idea that their largeness and grandness makes them legitimate and right. We often think that if we are part of a large gathering then we must be in the right, but being part of something small or seemingly insignificant by the world's standards causes us to question our validity. The Hebrew writer assures us that we are a true and legitimate church. We must open our spiritual eyes and realize that we are part of the biggest assembly possible; a heavenly assembly. When we find ourselves discouraged on a Wednesday night or Sunday morning because we looked around our assemblies
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- and they looked small and insignificant, let's pray that our spiritual eyes would be open so we can realize and remember what a great assembly we are actually part of.
- Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven
    - Church of the firstborn
      - Jesus is called the firstborn in Heb. 1:6.
      - we are part of the church of the firstborn (as in Christ) and that church is made up of people enrolled in heaven
    - Enrolled in heaven
      - The word enrolled has the idea of a registry. It's the word used of the census in Luke 2. It is something that would be written down. The Jews had their own temple registries. The writer is emphasizing here that you are part of a church that does not have a registry on earth but in heaven. That's is the registry we must strive to have our name written on. Jesus says in Luke 10:20 to rejoice that our names are recorded in heaven".
  - And to God, the judge of all
    - On Mount Sinai Moses led them out to meet God. See Ex. 19:17
    - By emphasizing that God is the judge of all, the writer is reminding us whose approval we must be seeking.
  - To the spirits of the righteous made perfect
    - We have come to a place where spirits are made complete
    - The word perfect is an important word in the book of hebrews
      - Heb. 2:10/5:9/9:9 states that Jesus was made perfect
      - 7:19 emphasis that the law made nothing perfect
      - 9:9-10:1 says that the OT sacrifices could not make the worshiper perfect
      - Finally in 10:14 Jesus has perfected for all time those who are sanctified
    - Point: We do not need anything in Judaism or any other religion to be made perfect and right with God. Jesus provides perfection and completeness.
  - **Hebrews 12:24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.**
    - The allusions to Mount Sinai continue in verse 24. Remember that on Mount Sinai God established the priesthood which served as a mediator between God and the people. On Mount Sinai they also inaugurated the old covenant by sprinkling blood (see heb. 9:19). I again imagine the jews mocking the christians saying, "we have actual priests, mediators, and covenants".
    - The Hebrew writer is making the point here that we in Christ have the fullness of all priests. Christ is the priest or mediator of the new covenant (see Heb. 8:6;9:15). This Covenant is one he inaugurated not with the blood of animals, but with his own blood (see Heb. 10:22; 1 Peter 1:2). We don't need to go back to Judaism to have priests and covenants because in Christ we have both. We only need to open our spiritual eyes. In today's religious climate people crave a physical priest; a representative or mediator between them and God. This takes many different forms today. Whether a literal priest

(catholic church) or pope, the virgin Mary, or just a local pastor that we think can mediate for us. We already have a mediator who through his blood sprinkled our hearts so that we can be close to God. Let's look to Him and not to earthly mediators.

- The blood of Able spoke justice and punishment after his brother unjustly killed him (see Gen. 4:10). Jesus in a similar way to Able was wrongly killed, but the blood of Christ does not cry out justice and punishment, but rather that the killers be forgiven. Jesus's blood cries out mercy.
- The overall point of Hebrews 12:18-24 is that Christians have received or are part of all the blessings of Mount Sinai. The physical blessings that Israel received on Mount Sinai were a foreshadow of the spiritual blessings we have now received in Christ. We can't see these blessings except through faith (see Heb. 11:1) that is how we can partake in them. May God help us to open our spiritual eyes.

### **Hebrews 12:25-29: Do not refuse Him who is speaking**

- **Hebrews 12:25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.**
  - Do not refuse Him who is speaking
    - The writer of Hebrews has already emphasized the importance of listening to Christ (See 2:1;3:7;5:11). But this topic is so important that he reminds us again.
  - For if...much less will we escape
    - In order to help us see the importance of listening to Jesus he uses the image of Mount Sinai again. His point is that if God held the people accountable when he spoke from the earthly Mountain in Sinai, how much more will he hold us accountable if we ignore Jesus who speaks from heaven. He makes a similar argument in Hebrews 2:2-3. More blessings means more accountability. God will not take it easier on us in the New Covenant, instead he will hold us to a higher standard. Let's not use the grace of the New covenant to ignore Jesus.
- **Hebrews 12:26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."**
  - His voice shook the earth then
    - When God spoke on Mount Sinai there was an earthquake (see Exodus 19).
  - But now he has promised saying, "yet once more"
    - Just like there was an earthquake on Mount Sinai another earthquake is coming.
    - In this passage he quotes Haggai 2:6. In Haggai 2:6 the construction of the temple had restarted, and the new construction seemed very insignificant. God promises to the people of Haggai's day that "latter glory of this house will be greater than the former".
    - In other words God was working on a new temple that would be bigger and better than the old one. What is the fulfillment of this promise? What temple has God built that is greater than the old temple? The Spiritual temple he has built in Christ; the

church. This temple is better because it is spiritual and will last forever. The writer of Hebrews is alluding here to a shaking (or quake) that is coming which will reveal that new temple as superior and as lasting when all the physical falls.

- **Hebrews 12:27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.**
  - Yet once more
    - An earthquake is coming. I believe this is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. What will happen when this earthquake takes place? It will remove the things that can be shaken; physical things (see hebrews 9:11). This earthquake will also reveal the things that will remain. When the destruction of Jerusalem came, the city and temple would be destroyed and then it would be obvious that what God intended to remain were the spiritual things (see heb. 12:22-24), things not of this creation but of the unshakable spiritual kingdom.
    - God shook things on Mount Sinai. He did it again in the destruction of Jerusalem. I believe he still shakes things up for christians living today so that we focus not on the physical things but on the spiritual. It is in these shakings that we can come to appreciate and be thankful to be a part of a spiritual (lasting) kingdom.
- **Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; [29] for our God is a consuming fire.**
  - Therefore:
    - Here are the implications or applications of what he has been saying
  - Receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken
    - The way kingdom is being used here is a generic way of talking about God's spiritual blessings. Since we are partakers or receivers all these spiritual benefits (see heb. 12:22-24)
  - Let us show gratitude
    - Rather than thinking about all the physical stuff we don't have, things like physical temples, large gatherings, festivals and registries, let's be thankful for the spiritual blessings that we have inherited. It is hard to be thankful for things we do not see, but that is what God has called us to do.
  - By which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe
    - Gratitude and awe (fear) are the keys to faithfulness and true worship.
    - Let's strive to be thankful and to have the awe that Moses had on Mount Sinai; recognizing that God is still a consuming fire.

### **Hebrews 13:1-6: Different exhortation**

- **Hebrews 13:1 Let love of the brethren continue.**
  - The word continue implies action and renewal. Perhaps the love among brethren became cold due to the persecution.

- Love is extremely important especially in the midst of persecution. When the world is rejecting you, brethren need to know they are loved.
- **Hebrews 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.**
  - It's easy to neglect hospitality when things are difficult, but love is most important in the midst of difficulty
  - In Hebrews 10:34 we learn that part of persecution was the loss of property-maybe even of their home, so it was important for Christians to step in and offer a place to stay.
  - This is a clear reference to the stories in Genesis 18:1/19:1. Both Abraham and Lot were hospitable
  - In the book of Hebrews, Christians are of more value than angels. In Heb. 1:14 angels serve the Christians. In Heb. 2:16 Jesus gives help to Christians rather than to angels. Therefore to host a Christian, even if a stranger, is an amazing privilege. Let's treat Christians even better than Abraham and Lot treated those angels.
  - Hebrews 13:3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.
  - Prisoners: In Hebrews 13:23 we learn that Timothy was in prison. In Hebrews 10:34 we know that they had been compassionate toward prisoners in the past.
  - The idea is to suffer with those who suffer. Don't forget about those Christians who have suffered injustice. Christians are part of the body. In the same way that we wouldn't forget about a hurt arm or leg, let's not forget about a suffering Christian.
  - In 2 Timothy 1 we can infer that it was a dangerous thing to visit a prisoner. Timothy seemed to be afraid of visiting Paul, and Paul has to encourage him. Onesiphorus was commended for coming to Paul while others abandoned him.
- **Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**
  - Were there some people teaching that marriage was not important? Later on in Heb 13:9 we know that people were teaching false things regarding foods. Interestingly, in 1 Tim. 4 when Paul was warning about false teachers in the future, he specifically said they would teach false things regarding food and marriage (see 1 Tim 4:1-5)
  - Marriage needed to remain important even in the midst of trials. It seems, based on the warning, that there was a temptation to abandon marriage and give in to sexual sin. When things are difficult there is often a temptation towards sexual sin as a release, and to feel better in the moment. The writer warns us to remember that marriage is a sacred thing.
  - The motivation to live this way is to remember that God will judge us.
- **Hebrews 13:5-6 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," [6] so that we confidently say, "The LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"**

- When we are going through trials it is easy to fall in love with money. It gives us a sense of security and protection. We say, “I have enough money to weather the storm.” Christians do not find security in possessions, but in the promise of God that he will never desert us or forsake us.
- One of the fundamental needs of human beings is to feel secure. There are only two ways to feel security. We can have our confidence in what is seen (money, insurance, connections, jobs) or in what is not seen (the lord and his promises). Looking for security in what is seen is never enough. How much money do we really need to feel safe? How many locks on our door finally allow us to feel secure in our homes? How many people do we need to have in our corner to feel at ease? It’s never enough. Real security only comes from knowing that the all powerful God is our helper
- How do I know my character is free from the love of money? That’s a hard things to figure out. I think there are two things in this text that helps us to guage that. Are we content people? And where does our confidence really lie?

### Hebrews 13:7-14: Going outside the camp with Jesus

- **Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.**
  - Remember those who led you
    - What leaders is he talking about? My first thought is that it is the apostles because the text makes it seem like they are not around. He speaks of these leaders in the past tense. He says things like “those who led you” and “spoke the word of God to you”. It looks like these leaders are not around because he says, “consider the result of their faith.” They have finished the race.
    - In contrast, it seems in Heb. 13:17 and Heb.13:24, that those leaders are still around.
    - So the main exhortation is to remember the words of the apostles, and to remember their conduct. We need to look to the past; to the apostle’s teaching- to know what Jesus is like. Notice the next verse says Jesus doesn’t change; the Jesus revealed by the apostles is the real Jesus, so let’s not be led astray by other teachings (see Heb. 13:9).
  - Notice he says remember the words and conduct. These are the two ways in which leaders lead.
- **Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**
  - In the context, this verse is about teaching (See V9 & V8). Why should I remember those who spoke the word of God? Because Jesus doesn’t change.
  - Jesus is God’s final word (see Heb. 1:1-3). The word forever means forever. This would eliminate false prophets like Mohammed and Joseph Smith who came later on.
- **Hebrews 13:9 Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.**
  - The strange or different teaching has to do with food. Are they teaching that eating from the altar makes you closer to God? (See Heb. 13:9). Or does this have to do with the Jews



and their food laws?

- The writer's point is that what really strengthens the heart is not food (Jewish food laws) but Grace (the Gospel).
- The writer also points out that these rituals did not even benefit the people in the old testament (see Heb. 9:10). Eating or not eating certain foods did not make people of the old testament more holy or fix their sin problem.
- **Hebrews 13:10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.**
  - It can be inferred from the text that the Jews or priests were mocking the Christians saying to them, "we have the privilege of eating from God's altar. What altar do you eat from?"
  - The writer is pointing out that we Christians have an altar that the priests and the Jewish people cannot eat from. He is obviously referring to the heavenly altar, of which the earthly one, which the Jews ate from, was only a copy (see Heb 8:5). He is making the same point again; to stop looking at the things you don't have, and look instead to what you already possess.
- **Hebrews 13:11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp.**
  - The sacrifice or offering that the writer is referring to is the sin offering; of which the people nor the priest were allowed to eat. Instead the bodies of those animals were burned outside the camp (see Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:12,21; Lev. 9:11; Lev. 16:27).
  - In contrast, we do get to partake of Jesus, the ultimate sin offering (see Heb. 9:12 ; 10:10). We symbolically eat his body when we partake of the Lord's supper. We have a privilege that the Jewish people could only dream of.
- **Hebrews 13:12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.**
  - Just like the bodies of the sin offering were burned outside the camp, city, or gate, Jesus, since he is the fulfillment of the sin offering, suffered outside the gate (see John 19:17).
  - Remember the part of the offering that was to be put outside the gate was the waste. Jesus was treated like garbage in order for us to be sanctified.
- **Hebrews 13:13 So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.**
  - If we want the benefit of this sin offering we must go outside the city with Jesus. In order to be partakers, we must go outside where Jesus is. We, like Jesus, will have to be willing to be ostracized and rejected. We must be willing to be treated like garbage by those 'in the city' to have the benefits of Jesus. To bear what he bore so that we can be sanctified.
  - Notice the encouragement to make the decision, "Go out to him"
  - Notice what we are not going out to- not simply out to reproachers, but out to a person. Jesus is waiting for us. That's the motivation to go out. Our savior is waiting for us on the other side of that wall. We must decide- will we stay in the city with the crowd? Or will we go outside of it to be with Jesus? The choice is ours.
- **Hebrews 13:14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which**

is to come.

- Some may say, “but if we go out, we will lose our city”. The writer reminds us that we have a lasting city (see also Heb. 11:10,16,22)
- We must decide between the physical city or the spiritual one, but we cannot have both.
- We must choose wisely because at the time of this letter, Jerusalem was going to be destroyed soon, and if we choose the physical city today, we will have nothing left. All earthly cities will pass away, so let’s join Jesus outside the city and wait for the one that is to come.

### Random Exhortation (Hebrews 13:15-19)

- **Hebrews 13:15-16 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. [16] And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**
  - In the New Covenant we offer sacrifices too. Through Jesus, when we sing with thanksgiving and do good, we are offering sacrifices. This text may also imply that the animal sacrifices of the Old testament were a shadow, and that what God was looking forward to was hearts that would sing and hands that help. He wanted a living sacrifice rather than a dead one (See Rom. 12:1). God wanted mercy and not sacrifice ( see Matt. 12:7)
- **Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.**
  - Submission implies obedience. If we don’t obey the instruction of the leader, can we really say that we are submitting?
  - Here we see the job description of a spiritual leader- which is to watch over people’s souls. The job of an elder is not to watch over a church building, manage a budget, or simply care for the physical (and passing) bodies of its members. Leaders need to be diligently watching over the souls.
  - What a responsibility God has placed on leadership; to watch over people’s souls. Let’s take this responsibility seriously- knowing that we will give an account. In Hebrews 13:20 Jesus is described as the Great Shepherd of the sheep. All shepherds will have to give an account to him who is the Head Shepherd. Let’s keep that in mind as we serve His flock.
  - If we don’t serve with a proper attitude, then our work is unprofitable.
- **Hebrews 13:18-19 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. [19] And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.**
  - Leaders need prayer too. Let’s be humble enough to ask for it.
  - notice what he is asking prayer for: that he would conduct himself honorably. Jesus’ blood gave us a good conscience (see Heb.10:22) let’s keep it that way.
  - What does the writer mean by “that I may be restored to you the sooner”? Is he in jail? (see Heb.13:23)

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**Benediction (Hebrews 13:20-25)**

- **Hebrews 13:20-21** Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, [21] equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
  - If the God of peace can raise Jesus from the dead, then he can give us peace and equip us (see Heb. 13:21).
  - If God can raise Jesus from the dead, then he can help these leaders in difficult times.
  - Remember he has mentioned leaders in Hebrews 13:17,24)
  - Jesus is the ultimate leader who paid the ultimate price with his own blood. Leaders need to look to him to be equipped and motivated.
  - Because God raised Jesus from the dead, leaders need not fear death.
  - Just because you are a leader doesn't mean that you don't need equipping. Leaders need equipping, and Jesus can equip you.
- **Hebrews 13:22** But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.
  - I have written briefly. The writer always feels like he could say more, but stops himself (see Heb. 9:5). This is a good lesson for preachers. We don't always have to say everything that we know.
- **Hebrews 13:23** Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.
  - Timothy is a great example of what the writer is exhorting his readers to be like. Timothy is willing to be imprisoned for Christ.
  - This detail shows that Timothy made it to Rome (see Heb. 13:24), just as Paul was urging him to do in the letter of 2nd Timothy.
  - By mentioning Timothy, the writer shows that he is part of the inner circle (see also Heb. 2:3-4). We don't know who the writer of this letter is, but he was at least familiar with the other writers of the New Testament. That should give us confidence that he is an inspired writer (he is in the inner circle).
- **Hebrews 13:24-25** Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. [25] Grace be with you all.
  - The writer finds himself in Rome (see Acts 18:2).

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