

A Simple  
Commentary  
on the  
Book of Hebrews  
by Rénaud Leroux Jr.

## *Info page*

A Simple Commentary on the book of Hebrews.

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## *01 - Introduction to the Book of Hebrews*

The author:

Simply said, no one really knows who wrote the Book of Hebrews. Some, like Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and Origen (185-254), thought it was written by Paul. Others, like Tertullian (150–220), believed that Barnabas wrote it. Some believed it to be written by Luke, others by Apollos. Some even believed it was written by Silvanus, a co-worker of Paul.

The book itself makes no reference to its author. It is widely believed that the author was a Jew because of the following:

- The author knew the Old Testament very well.
- The author knew the practices of his contemporary Jews.

Facts that show that Paul is probably not the author.

- Paul always names himself in his letters, this is not the case.
- This letter is not written in the same "Pauline style".
- There is no personal reference to Paul's life like he does in his writings.

## 2. Date and destination:

The Book of Hebrews was known by Clement of Rome and was written about in his writings (1 Clement-AD 95). There is no mention of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which happened in AD 70. The book was written during the lifetime of Timothy (Heb. 13:23). It is believed that this book must have been written in the latter part of the sixth decade (AD 67-69). But no one is certain of the exact date.

The destination of this letter is obviously the Hebrew population. It is believed that this letter was destined for Hellenist Jews since all the Old Testament quotations came from the LXX (Septuagint). As for the text itself, it does not refer to where these Jews were living (inside or outside of Palestine).

There are two views concerning what "type" of Jews this epistle was mainly written for. The first is that this letter was written for a "mix" of believing and non believing Jews. This would explain the different warnings since some Jews would have professed to know Christ when this was not the case. We can see the same thing in our churches today, which have both true believers and those who profess to believe but do not. The second view is that this was mainly written for Jews who believed but wanted to go back to the Jewish traditions because of social pressure. Therefore, they place themselves once more under the Law of Moses. This would explain the lengthy exposé of the superiority of Jesus and his perfect sacrifice at the cross.

There are no references to the Gentiles in the Book of Hebrews.

### 3. Some reasons why Hebrews was written:

The main reason why the Book of Hebrews was written was to encourage the Jewish people to reject Jewish traditions and to remain faithful to the Gospel message found in the Messiah.

### 4. The purpose of the Book of Hebrews:

1) To encourage its readers to become mature in the faith (13:22). 2) To warn its readers against going back to Judaism and being once more trapped by the Law. 3) To manifest the superiority of Jesus Christ in all things. 4) To manifest the passing away of the covenant of the law and the introduction of the new covenant.

### 5. The theme of Hebrews:

The main theme of the book of Hebrews is the ministry of Christ towards his disciples because of his role as the Messiah. One can say that the theme verses of Hebrews are Heb. 10:23,24. Other themes can also be found depending on what you are specifically looking for.

## *02 - Jesus the glory of God*

Hebrews 1:1-3

**1** *Although* God spoke long ago in many parts and in many ways to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all *things*, through whom also he made the world, <sup>3</sup>who is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, sustaining all *things* by the word of power. *When he* had made purification for sins through him, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,  
(LEB)

This letter does not begin with a normal introduction (who wrote it and to whom it is destined for). It actually does not have any introduction! The epistle to the Hebrews reads as if it were a theological thesis concerning the superiority of Jesus the Messiah over all things and the introduction of the New covenant prophesized by Jeremiah (31:31-34).

*Although* God spoke long ago in many parts and in many ways to the fathers by the prophets,

He begins by showing how God (THEOS - the supreme God, creator and sustainer of all things) the Father communicated with his people in the past. This God was not silent but "*spoke*" (LALÉO - to talk, utter words, speak) from "*long ago*" (POLUMEROS - in many portions, various times) and in "*many ways*" (POLUTROPOS - many ways, methods, forms). Although God spoke through dreams, as with Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, the author specifically points out that the Lord God spoke through the "*prophets*" (PROPHETES - a foreteller, an inspired speaker). Some have participated in writing the Old Testament, while others simply spoke from the Lord, as the prophet Nathan did when he spoke to King David concerning Bathsheba. The author writes that these prophets, sent from the Lord, were to be his heralds among his people, the Jews. The reference used is "*to the fathers*" (PATER - a father: literally or figuratively). The author is making a reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had spoken through the ages - from the garden of Eden to the final invitation found in Rev. 22:17.

<sup>2</sup>in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all *things*, through whom also he made the world, <sup>3</sup>who is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, sustaining all *things* by the word of power. *When he* had made purification for sins through him, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

The author now presents us with the central figure of his letter - Jesus of Nazareth, the long-awaited Messiah. The author describes Jesus Christ in seven different aspects.

**First, he is described as the mouth-piece of God.**

<sup>2</sup>in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,

Notice that it was "in the past" that the Lord God spoke to his people through his prophets. But times have changed. It is now the Son who speaks. God now had "*spoken*" (LALEO - to talk, utter words, speak) in the "*last days*" (ESCHATOS HEMERA - ends of the time space) by his "*Son*" (HUIOS - a son, kinship, a child). The author seems to make a separation between the prophets of old and the Messiah. As we know, God no longer wanted to speak through prophets, but he actually desired to speak for himself by becoming Emmanuel (God with us). What we hear from the Son are the words of the Father:

John 12

49 "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

50 "And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

(NKJV)

**Second, he is described as the heir.**

v.2 ... whom he appointed heir of all *things*,

Jesus was "*appointed*" (TITHEMI - to place, appoint, ordain). In no way did Jesus have to "work" to become worthy of receiving this heritage, for he is the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18). It was given by the Father to the Son. The Father chose the Son to be the "*heir*" (KLERONOMOS - a sharer by lot, inheritor, heir) of ALL THINGS (John 3:35; 13:3; 16:15). Note that the text says that Jesus is the heir of ALL things. There is nothing in this world that does not technically belong to the Son, for the Father has given all things to him.

**Third, he is described as creator.**

v.2 ... through whom also he made the world

It is written "*he made*" (POIEO - to make or do, appoint, ordain, to be the author of) "*the world*" (AION - an age, the world). What we see here may be difficult to express. Through the Father's will, the Son created all things (John 1:3,10). The universe and all that it contains were created by Christ for his glory.

Colossians 1

16 for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities--all things were created through him and for him.

(RSV)

We see that the Father glorifies the Son through creation. Should not all true believers glorify the Son through their lives?

**Fourth, he is a perfect reflection of the Father.**

<sup>3</sup> who is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence

If you wonder what the Father is like, all you need to do is to look at the Son, for he is His exact reflection. Jesus is the "*radiance*" (APAUGASMA - an off-flash, to shine, brightness) of his (God's) "*glory*" (DOXA - to render glory, honor, magnify). APAUGASMA is used only ONCE in the New Testament. It is called an Hapax. No one

else in the universe is the true reflection of God the Father. Do you remember when Philip asked Jesus the following question about the Father:

John 14

8 Philip said to him, Lord, let us see the Father, and we have need of nothing more.

9 Jesus said to him, Philip, have I been with you all this time, and still you have no knowledge of me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. Why do you say, Let us see the Father?

(BBE)

Jesus is the "*representation*" (CHARAKTER - a graver, engraving, exact expression of a person or a thing). The character of Christ is that of the Father. In other words, the mind of Christ is the exact mind of the Father. They are exactly the same in thought, character, and action. That is why Jesus told Philip that seeing him (his life, deeds, and thoughts) is the perfect reflection of the Father. Jesus is the "*essence*" (HUPOSTATIS - the substantial quality, nature of a person or thing) of the Father. These are difficult notions to fully understand. What we can understand is that God the Son took on flesh to become a man (Mat. 1:23; Rom. 8:3).

Philippians 2

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,  
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

(NKJV)

**Fifth, he sustains all things.**

v.3 ... sustaining all *things* by the word of power.

Jesus is "*sustaining*" (PHERO - to bear, to carry, uphold) ALL THINGS. Here we see that the Son is the power behind the movement, life, and coordination of every single thing in the universe. Whether it be a bee hovering over a flower or an asteroid speeding through the galaxy, All things have movement and being because of his will, and all things work together! Jesus does this by his "*word*" (RHEMA - an utterance, saying, or

word). He is the LOGOS through which the universe and all that it contains came to be. Everything came to exist because Jesus (the LOGOS) spoke it to be, as we see in the creation story. Imagine the power, authority, and command that lie in his words!

**Six, he purifies the sinner.**

v.3 ...*When he* had made purification for sins through him

In the plan of redemption, it is the Son who makes "purification" (KATHARISMOS - a washing off, expiation, purge) for "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offence, violation of the divine Law). The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death.

Romans 6

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(RSV)

It also tells us that the sinner can be purified of all his sins by the free gift which is given through Jesus Christ. Jesus has the power and authority to forgive sins (Mat. 9:6). The author of this Hebrews will write about this subject later on in his epistle.

Romans 10

9 that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(WEB)

**Seven, he is with the Father.**

v.3 ...he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Once the beloved Son had finished his redemptive work here on earth (John 19:30), he ascended to his Father (Acts 1:9). He is presently seated at the "*right hand*" (DEXIOS - the right side, right hand) of the Father, who is the "Majesty on high". In the Bible, the

position of being at the right hand was a symbol of honor and power (Ps. 45:9; 80:17; 110:1; Mat. 26:64)

May these seven aspects of Jesus encourage you to honor and live for his glory just like he lived for the glory of his Father.

### 03 - *Jesus is superior to angels*

Hebrews 1:4-14

- <sup>4</sup> having become by so much better than the angels, by as much as he has inherited a more excellent name than theirs.
- <sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did he ever say, “You are my son, today I have begotten you,” and again, “I will be *his father*, and he will be *my son*”?
- <sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “And let all *the* angels of God worship him.”
- <sup>7</sup> And concerning the angels he says, “The one who makes his angels winds, and his servants a flame of fire,”
- <sup>8</sup> but concerning the Son, “Your throne, O God, *is forever and ever*, and the scepter of righteous *is the* scepter of your kingdom.
- <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; because of this God, your God, has anointed you with the olive oil of joy more than your companions.
- <sup>10</sup> And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the works of your hands;
- <sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you continue, and they will all become old like a garment,
- <sup>12</sup> and like a robe you will roll them up, and like a garment they will be changed; but you are the same, and your years will not run out.”
- <sup>13</sup> But to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”
- <sup>14</sup> Are they not all spirits engaged in special service, sent on assignment for the sake of those who are going to inherit salvation?

(LEB)

The author of the Book of Hebrews begins by demonstrating (as he will throughout his book) the superiority, or should I say, the supremacy, of Jesus Christ over ALL things. He will systematically demolish common Jewish thoughts of his day, which made Jesus just a man and not the Messiah.

<sup>4</sup> having become by so much better than the angels, by as much as he has inherited a more excellent name than theirs.

He first points out that the Lord Jesus is "*so much*" (TOSOUTOS - so vast as this, so great) "*better*" (KRATAIOO - to empower, increase in vigor, be strong) than the angels (AGGELOS - a messenger, an angel). Before the creation of mankind, the Lord God created angels—spirits that were at his service. When the rebellion led by Lucifer came, the angels fell into two categories depending on their loyalty to the Lord. The ones who rebelled became known as "fallen angels, evil spirits," while the ones who remained faithful are simply known as "angels, spirits." It is evident that the author is comparing Jesus to the faithful angels. He specifies that his "*inheritance*" (KLERONOMEIO - to be an heir to, inherit) is more "*excellent*" (DIAPHOROS - surpassing, more excellent) than theirs. His "*name*" (ONOMA - a name, authority, character) is above their names. In the book of Revelations, we see that Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God, is being worshipped by angelic beings.

#### Revelation 5

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
(NKJV)

No angel would accept being worshipped as we see in the following text:

#### Revelation 22

8 I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me;

9 but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."  
(RSV)

Please note that the author will use verses from the Old Testament profusely in order to prove to his readers who Jesus of Nazareth truly is. This is something that all true believers should be able to do. We are to use the inspired Scriptures and not human philosophy or our own thoughts to prove who Christ is. Allow the Bible to speak for itself.

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did he ever say, "You are my son, today I have begotten you," and again, "I will be *his father*, and he will be *my son*"?

In this verse, we understand that God is used as the first witness of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The author asks a question, "To which of the angels did he (God the father) ever say?" The author desires his readers to think and reflect on the following excerpts from the Holy Scriptures. We are all called to think and reflect on what is written in the Bible. Three quotes from the Old Testament are used for his argument.

Has the Father ever said to an angel, "You are my son, today I have begotten you?" (Ps. 2:7) The word "*begotten*" (GENNAO - to procreate, beget, bring forth) is difficult to understand. It probably refers to the sending of God the Son (who took on flesh) by the Father and his resurrection from the dead.

#### Acts 13

32 And we are giving you the good news of the undertaking made to the fathers,  
33 Which God has now put into effect for our children, by sending Jesus; as it says in the second Psalm, You are my Son; this day I have given you being.  
34 And about his coming back from the dead, never again to go to destruction, he has said these words, I will give you the holy and certain mercies of David.  
(BBE)

No angel had took on flesh, lived as a man, died for our sins been was raised back to life.

v.5 ... and again,  
"I will be *his father*, and he will be *my son*"?

This is a quote from 2 Samuel 7:14 where God promises King David that he shall have an heir on which God will build his kingdom. We know that this is speaking about Jesus, who was a descendant of King David and on whom the righteous kingdom of God is founded. This manifests once more the supremacy of the Lord Jesus over the angels.

<sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,  
“And let all *the* angels of God worship him.”

Another proof that Christ is supreme over the angels is the fact that they are commanded to worship Christ. Note that Jesus is called the "*firstborn*" (PHOTOTOKOS - first born). Jesus is called "first born" in Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15,18; Rev. 1:5. These verses refer to Christ coming in the flesh and atoning for our sins. In Rom. 8:29, Christ is referred to as the firstborn of a new order of mankind - the Redeemed. This verse is a quote from Ps. 97:7 where angels are commanded to "*worship*" (PROSKUNEO - to crouch, prostrate oneself in homage) him.

<sup>7</sup> And concerning the angels he says, “The one who makes his angels winds,  
and his servants a flame of fire,”

<sup>8</sup> but concerning the Son, “Your throne, O God, *is forever and ever*<sup>[1]</sup>,  
and the scepter of righteous *is the* scepter of your kingdom.

These two quotes are given so we can compare what the Father says about both the angels and his Son. The first is from Ps. 104:4,

“The one who makes his angels winds,  
and his servants a flame of fire,”

Here we see that God the Father "*makes*" (POIEO - to make or do) his angels "*winds*" (PNEUMA - a current of air, breath, a spirit). They are created just as all things outside of the triune God are created.

<sup>8</sup> but concerning the Son, “Your throne, O God, *is forever and ever*,  
and the scepter of righteous *is the* scepter of your kingdom.

This is a quote from Ps. 45:6 and describes NOT AN ANGEL but God the Son. First of all, the Son has a "*throne*" (THRONOS - a stately seat, power, potentate). Nowhere in the heavens do we see any angelic beings sitting on thrones above other thrones. The throne is the symbol of the highest authority, and only God can sit on the throne of heaven. Second, the Son is called "*God*" (THEOS - the supreme God, creator and sustainer". It would be blasphemous to believe that angels (who are created) could ever be God! But the Son (the Messiah) is called God by the Father himself! Third, we see that his reign is for "*ever and ever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, eternal). Another proof that the Son is the eternal God and not an angel. Fourth, it is mentioned that the sceptre of the Son is a symbol of his "*righteousness*" (EUTHUTES - rectitude, righteousness). This word is a hapax because it is only used once in the New Testament. It is also a symbol of his "*kingdom*" (BASILEA - royalty, rule, realm, kingdom). As you can see, there is NO comparison between any angelic being and God the Son!

- <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;  
because of this God, your God, has anointed you  
with the olive oil of joy more than your companions.

This is a quote from Ps. 45:7 and it describes (in human terms) why the Messiah is God in the flesh (Gal. 4:23; Eph. 2:15; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 5:7). We see that the Messiah "*loved*" (AGAPAO - to love in a moral or social sense) "*righteousness*" (DIKAIOSUNE - equity of character or act) and he "*hated*" (MISEO - hatred, to detest, persecute) "*lawlessness*" (ANOMIA - illegality, violation of the law). His character is perfect in every sense. He is morally perfect, which makes him holy. He is called "*God*" (THEOS - the supreme God, creator and sustainer). Here we see that God the Father is well pleased with God the Son, like we see also in the following verse.

### Matthew 3

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(NKJV)

Here the writer continues to manifest why Jesus the Messiah is supreme over the angels.

<sup>10</sup> And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,  
and the heavens are the works of your hands;  
<sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you continue, and they will all become old like a garment,  
<sup>12</sup> and like a robe you will roll them up, and like a garment they will be changed;  
but you are the same, and your years will not run out."

These three verses quote Ps. 102:25-27. The author of Hebrews testifies by doing this that the Son is the creator and sustainer of all things, as he also mentions in Heb. 1:2. It was Christ that "*in the beginning*" (ARCHE - a commencement, chief, beginning) laid the "*foundation*" (THEMELIOO - a basis for, foundation) of the "*earth*" (GE - soil, a region, a country, earth). Not only did the Son create the earth, but he also laid the foundation for the "*heavens*" (OURANOS - the sky, heaven, the universe) because they are the "*works*" (ERGON - to work, toil, an effort, labor) "of your hands." There is only ONE creator - the triune God. Angels are creatures, not creators!

<sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you continue, and they will all become old like a garment,

Here we see that the earth and everything in the universe will "*perish*" (APOLLUMI - to destroy fully) but you (the Son) will "*continue*" (DIAMENO - to stay constantly, continue, remain). Here we see that the Son has no beginning and no end, since he was the creator and will continue to live after the universe has been destroyed. Everything else (not humans, not angels, because since they were created they will live for all time) in the universe will become "*old*" (PALAIOO - to make worn out, decay).

<sup>12</sup> and like a robe you will roll them up, and like a garment they will be changed;  
but you are the same, and your years will not run out."

The heavens, the earth, and all else are compared to a "*robe*" (PERIBOLAION - a mantle, veil, covering) that "you," that is the Son, will "*change*" (ALLASSO - to make different, change). We know that a new heaven and earth will be created in the end times and the old will be done away with.

## 2 Peter 3

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

11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?  
13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

(NKJV)

The author continues by writing that "you (the Son) are the same, and your years will not run out." The words "*run out*" (EKLEIPO - to omit, cease, die, fail) prove again that Christ supremely surpasses angels.

<sup>13</sup> But to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

<sup>14</sup> Are they not all spirits engaged in special service, sent on assignment for the sake of those who are going to inherit salvation?

One final proof that Jesus Christ is the Messiah is found in verse thirteen. Has God ever said to an angel, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?" The idea of the words "*sit down*" (KATHEMAI - to sit down, remain, reside, dwell) gives the idea that the Son is permanently sitting at the "*right hand*" (DEXIOS - the right side or hand) of the Father. This is the second time the author states that Christ is at the right hand of the Father (1:3). This is a quote from Ps. 110:1 and refers to the Messiah and not an angel.

One day all the "*enemies*" (ECHTHROS - hateful, odious, adversary) of Christ will be as a "*footstool*" (HUPOPODION - something under the feet). In other words, they will be crushed and the picture of them being under the feet of the Messiah manifests that he will be their master and reign over them.

<sup>14</sup>Are they not all spirits engaged in special service, sent on assignment for the sake of those who are going to inherit salvation?

In this last verse, the author reverts to what angels truly are. This gives the final blow to anyone who believed that they were superior to Christ. They are "*spirits*" (PNEUMA - a current of air, breath, a spirit) who are in "*special service*" (LEITOURGIKOS - beneficent, ministering) for the "*sake*" (MELLO - to intend, to be about, ready) of those who are going to "*inherit*" (KLERONOMEIO - to be an heir, inheritance), "*salvation*" (SOTERION - defender, defense, salvation). In other words, angels are God-sent spiritual beings who, in some way (we really don't know how or the extent of this) are there to protect and help true believers until they receive their full inheritance. Jesus may have made a reference to this in Mat. 18:10.

## 04 - A warning against drifting away

Hebrews 2:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Because of this, *it is* all the more necessary *that* we pay attention to the *things* we have heard, lest we drift away. <sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken through angels was binding and every transgression and act of disobedience received a just penalty, <sup>3</sup> how will we escape *if we* neglect so great a salvation which had *its* beginning *when it* was spoken through the Lord *and* was confirmed to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> *while* God was testifying at the same time by signs and wonders and various miracles and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his will.

(LEB)

Verse one brings us to the natural conclusion of what should be the believer's response to what he has just read in our last section.

<sup>1</sup> Because of this, *it is* all the more necessary *that* we pay attention to the *things* we have heard, lest we drift away.

Because of what? Because Jesus is superior over the angels, since he is the creator and sustainer of all things, it is "*more necessary*" (DIE - it was necessary, must, there is need of) that we "*pay attention*" (PERISSOTEROS PROSECHO - superabundantly understand, to hold the mind towards). This means that Christians should really, really pay attention and be focused on the things they have "*heard*" (AKOUO - to hear, to understand).

There is a reason, which is our first warning in the book of Hebrews, why the writer gives this warning: "*lest we drift away*" (PARARRHUEO - carelessly pass by, let slip, glide by). The author knows the power of the flesh and reminds his readers that what they have heard concerning the Messiah and his teachings MUST NOT be passed by. We must remember that this epistle was written not to a specific church but to Jewish people who declared faith in Christ. Unfortunately (as in all churches today), not everybody who said they believed was truly born again. Remember these words from the Lord:

### Matthew 7

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'

(RSV)

There is actually a double warning in this verse. The first is that if you have heard what Christ has taught and you just let it pass by without grasping this spiritual truth, then you are in grave danger. You are in danger because you have neglected the salvation story and you will be judged and suffer the eternal consequence. The second warning is that if you are a true believer and you neglect or disregard the teachings of Christ, then you will drift away and once more be trapped by the sins of the flesh and also suffer the natural consequences of this.

<sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken through angels was binding and every transgression and act of disobedience received a just penalty,

This is not an easy verse because there is very little reference to what the author is writing about. The role of the angels in bringing the "*word*" (LOGOS - something said, talk, utterance) "*spoken*" (LALÉO - to talk, preach, speak) probably points to Moses when he received the Ten Commandments (Acts 7:38,53; Gal. 3:19) or when an angel spoke in the name of the Lord to a specific person (as with Mary, the mother of Jesus). These words were "*binding*" (BEBAIOS - firm, force, steadfast, sure). This is not because they are spoken by them, because Satan speaks, but he is the father of lies:

### John 8

44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

(RSV)

Rather, because what they said were the very words of the Lord God. Because what the angels said was "binding," every person had to obey what the Lord had commanded. If there was a "*transgression*" (PARABASIS - violation, transgression) or an act of "*disobedience*" (PARAKOE - inattention, disobedience) people would "*receive*" (LAMBANO - to take, catch, hold, attain) a "*just*" (ENDIKOS - in the right, equitable, just) "*penalty*" (MISTHAPODOSIA - requital good or bad). In other words, people who did not listen to what the messengers of the Lord brought forth, suffered the rightful judgment.

The writer of Hebrews seems to be very concerned about the fact that there are people who will neglect (in one way or another) the commandments of God and will receive a judgment against them. This still stands today. Non believers will receive their lot in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15) while believers who are stubborn will reap what they have sown (Gal. 6:7).

<sup>3</sup> how will we escape *if we* neglect so great a salvation which had *its* beginning *when* *it* was spoken through the Lord *and* was confirmed to us by those who heard,

A question is brought forth: "How will we "*escape*" (EKPHEUGO - to flee out, escape)? Is there a way that we can escape the hand of God? Is there somewhere that we can flee to be out of His reach? Is it possible to hide from God? The obvious answer is NO. No one can hide from God!

#### Psalms 139

11 If I say, Only let me be covered by the dark, and the light about me be night;  
12 Even the dark is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day: for dark and light  
are the same to you.

(BBE)

How will we escape IF we "*neglect*" (AMELEO - to be careless of, to make light of) so "*great*" (TELIKOUTOS - magnitude, so vast, so great) a "*salvation*" (SOTERIA - rescue, safety, deliver, salvation)? It is not that salvation is not offered, it is rather that it is neglected. People simply do not want to hear that they are sinners and are in dire need of salvation through Jesus Christ the Messiah. People do not want to admit that there

are times when they do wrong to others and to God. They have a twisted heart but would rather believe that this was not so.

Jeremiah 17

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?  
10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

(NKJV)

Let us not be neglectful nor deny that we have sinned against the Lord God and the people around us. We all have failed, each and every single one of us (Rom. 3:9-18).

v.3... which had *its* beginning *when it* was spoken through the Lord *and* was confirmed to us by those who heard,

The author continues to speak of the "so great a salvation." The "Good News" or salvation story had its "*beginning*" (ARCHE - a commencement, beginning, first) when it was simply "*spoken*" (LALEO - to talk, utter words, say). God made a promise to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After they had fallen into sin and God brought judgment, He promised that one day someone would come and crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). It was spoken and it came to be, when Christ won over Satan and sin at the cross. He was victorious over death, and his victory cry was heard.

John 19

30 When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

(RSV)

The gospel story, the story of salvation, was "*confirmed*" (BEBAIOO - confirm, establish, make sure) "*to us*". This is important in relation to who the author of this epistle is. The writer says that the salvation story was transmitted to "US" (he is part of those to whom it was told) by those who "*heard*" (AKOUO - to hear, come to the ears). It was a person who transmitted this story to them. We know that Paul received that gospel story directly from the Lord when he met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). I believe that this is proof that the book of Hebrews WAS NOT written by Paul.

<sup>4</sup> *while* God was testifying at the same time by signs and wonders and various miracles and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his will.

The writer says that the confirmation of the gospel story was not only given verbally by those (probably the Apostles) who spoke it. But God was also "*testifying*" (SUNEPIMARTUREO - to testify, bear witness) that it was true with "*signs*" (SEMEION - an indication, to mark supernaturally) and "*wonders*" (TERAS - a prodigy, omen, wonder) and also with "*various*" (POIKILOS - motley, divers, manifold) "*miracles*" (DUNAMIS - to enable, power for performing miracles). God also testified to this truth through the "*distribution*" (MERISMOS - distribution, dividing, gift) of the Holy Spirit. We know that this first began on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. All of this was according to his "*will*" (THELESIS - determination, a willing will).

We all need to heed the warning that is given concerning the salvation story, which was confirmed by God and those he sent to spread the "Good News". If we let it pass by and neglect it before we die, then there is NO OTHER way to escape the coming judgment. If we have received salvation but walk on the wide road, mocking God by doing so, then we also will receive what we have sown here on earth.

## 05 - *Jesus crowned with future glory*

Hebrews 2:5-9

<sup>5</sup> For he did not subject to angels the world to come, about which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> But someone testified somewhere, saying,  
“What is man, that you remember him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?  
<sup>7</sup> You made him for a short *time* lower than the angels;  
you crowned him with glory and honor;  
<sup>8</sup> you subjected all *things* under his feet.

For in subjecting all *things*, he left nothing *that was* not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all *things* subjected to him, <sup>9</sup> but we see Jesus, for a short *time* made lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that apart from God he might taste death on behalf of everyone.

The author continues to distinguish Jesus from the angels.

<sup>5</sup> For he did not subject to angels the world to come, about which we are speaking.

The "he" who the author is writing about is God the Father. We will see that the Father did not confer glory on angels as he did with Jesus Christ, his beloved Son (Mark 1:11). The father DID NOT "*subject*" (HUPOTASSO - to subordinate, to obey) the "*world*" (OIKOUMENE - land, globe, earth) "*to come*" (MELLO - to intend, be about to be, to come) to the angels. In other words, the angels would not rule or have authority over the world. Jesus has made this very clear.

### Matthew 28

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.  
(NKJV)

Although evil spirits can procure illnesses and bring destruction in the lives of people, we know that this is ONLY after receiving permission to do so (Job 1 & 2). We also know

that these demons are terribly afraid of the authority that the Messiah has over them (Mat. 8:29). They know very well who Jesus is.

Mark 1

23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit;

24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"

(RSV)

In the following verses, the author will show what the Father has done to manifest the supremacy of the Son over the angels.

<sup>6</sup> But someone testified somewhere, saying,  
"What is man, that you remember him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?"

This is taken from Psalm 8. This psalm refers to "man" but also "son of man". One needs to understand the difference. When it is "*testified*" (DIAMARTUROMAI - to attest, to witness) about "man", the author is speaking about mankind in general. The Lord God does "*remember*" (MIMNESKO - to remind, to recall to mind) man, as we see in Mat. 5:45. God takes care of his creatures and provides for them. The text also speaks of the "son of man". This was a Messianic title that the Lord Jesus used for himself (Mat. 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19 and many others). In the following two verses, we will see in what way the Father uniquely cared for the "Son of Man".

<sup>7</sup> You made him for a short *time* lower than the angels;  
you crowned him with glory and honor;  
<sup>8</sup> you subjected all *things* under his feet.

There are three things that the author mentions that close the argument concerning Jesus being superior to angels. The first is the following:

<sup>7</sup> You made him for a short *time* lower than the angels;

This is the first one, and again, the "you" is God the Father. For a "*short time*" (BRACHUS - few, little, short) the Father made him "*lower*" (ELATTOO - to lessen, decrease, make lower) than the angels. If the Father made the Son "*lower*" than angels for a short time, it obviously means that the Son was "*higher*" than they were before this happened! When did this happen? When was God the Son made "*lower*" than the angels? It is at his incarnation - when he became man (Mat. 1:23).

### 1 Timothy 3

16 And without argument, great is the secret of religion: He who was seen in the flesh, who was given God's approval in the spirit, was seen by the angels, of whom the good news was given among the nations, in whom the world had faith, who was taken up in glory.

(BBE)

Jesus became man so that he could become the "second Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) and live the perfect life so that he could become the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36) and bring redemption to those who would repent and ask Christ to become their Savior (Act 4:10-12).

v.7 ...you crowned him with glory and honor;

The second is that the Father "*crowned*" (STEPHANOO - to adorn with an honorary wreath, a crown) him (the Son) with "*glory*" (DOXA - dignity, glory, honor, praise) and "*honor*" (TIME - esteem, glory). Even before time, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lived in a glory that human words could not express. When the Son took on flesh, he left his glory behind to become fully man. The Father glorified the Son through his miracles, power over evil spirits, death, resurrection, ascension, and now he sits at the right hand of the Father.

### Acts 5

30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

(NKJV)

The third statement is the following.

<sup>8</sup> you subjected all *things* under his feet.

The Father "*subjected*" (HUPOTASSO - to subordinate, be under obedience) all things. By this, we see that there is nothing or no one that is not under the ruling power of the Son. All bow down to worship the risen Lamb!

#### Revelation 5

12 Saying with a great voice, It is right to give to the Lamb who was put to death, power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.

13 And to my ears came the voice of everything in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and of all things which are in them, saying, To him who is seated on the high seat, and to the Lamb, may blessing and honour and glory and power be given for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, So be it. And the rulers went down on their faces and gave worship.

(BBE)

The author continues to explain the supremacy of Christ.

v.8 ... For in subjecting all *things*, he left nothing *that was* not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all *things* subjected to him,

As we have already seen, there is nothing that is not subject to him. The problem that we face is that we DO NOT yet see (NUN HORAO - now discern clearly or presently stare at) all things "*subjected*" (HUPOTASSO - to subordinate, be under obedience) to him. In other words, we presently do not see Christ reign over all things. The time has not yet come when the Son will return to rule on earth during the millennium and introduce the world into eternity where he will sit on his throne in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). That is why true believers need to live by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11) and not by sight, because our eyes cannot see Christ presently sitting at the right hand of the Father.

<sup>9</sup> but we see Jesus, for a short *time* made lower than the angels, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that apart from God he might taste death on behalf of everyone.

If we are not presently able to see Jesus glorified and sitting at the right hand of the Father, there is a Jesus that we can "see" (BLEPO - to look at, behold, regard, see) and that was just for a short time (His time here on earth). During this short time, he "*was made*" (ELATTOO - to lessen, decrease, made lower) than angels (we have seen this in verse seven). The author gives us the reasons why Jesus was made lower than the angels.

v.9 ...because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that apart from God he might taste death on behalf of everyone.

Here we see two main reasons (which are intertwined). The first was because of his "*suffering*" (PATHERMA - hardship, pain, affliction) "*death*" (THANATOS - death, literally or figuratively). He was made lower than the angels so that he could be fully man and suffer the death of the cross and all that it incurred. He tasted the Father's cup of wrath to the brim (Mat. 26:39,42). It was through his sufferings at the cross that redemption was released to the children of Adam who would call upon his name for salvation. Note that it was through the suffering of his death that glory and honor were bestowed on Jesus the Messiah. The second is that Christ would "*taste*" (GEUOMAI - to taste, to experience) death on behalf of everyone. In other words, Christ tasted the father's judgment, which brought spiritual separation between them so that true believers would not have to taste the wrath of the Father nor eternal separation from him. This is the grace of God manifested towards mankind.

### John 3

16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (NKJV)

## 06 - *Jesus the originator of salvation*

Hebrews 2:10-18

<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting for him for whom *are all things* and through whom *are all things* in bringing many sons to glory to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For both the one who sanctifies and the ones who are sanctified *are all* from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers, <sup>12</sup>saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the assembly I will sing in praise of you.”

<sup>13</sup>And again,

“I will trust in him.”

And again,

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

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, since the children share in blood and flesh, he also in like manner shared in these *same things*, in order that through death he could destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup>and could set free these who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all their lives. <sup>16</sup>For surely he is not concerned with angels, but he is concerned with the descendants of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore he was obligated to be made like his brothers in all *respects*, in order that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things relating to God, in order to make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>For in that which he himself suffered *when he was tempted*, he is able to help those who are tempted.

(LEB)

In this section, the writer describes Jesus as the one who made atonement for sins and how he can have compassion on those who are tempted by the devil.

<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting for him for whom *are all things* and through whom *are all things* in bringing many sons to glory to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings.

In this verse, we see that there are three different actors who participate in the Father's master plan. The first is the Father, for whom it was "*fitting*" (PREPO - to be suitable, proper) for him to do two things. The first is "*bringing*" (AGO - bring forth, carry, lead away) "*many*" (POLUS - much, many, abundant) "*sons*" (HUIOS - a son immediate or remote, kinship) to "*glory*" (DOXA - dignity, glory, honor, praise). Somehow, someday, the Father decided to have adopted sons and daughters (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). We can call this the beginning of the plan of redemption, and it entails the children of Adam, who are the third actors in this verse. What the Father promises them is glory when they enter their heavenly home. The second thing that was fitting for the Father to do was to "*perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, fulfill, make perfect) the originator (that's Jesus, the second actor in this verse) of their "*salvation*" (SOTERIA - rescue, safety, deliverance). This perfecting was to be done through "*sufferings*" (OATHEMA - hardship, pain, affliction). We can easily identify the sufferings mainly as the judgment that fell upon him at the cross.

<sup>11</sup> For both the one who sanctifies and the ones who are sanctified *are* all from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

The one who "*sanctifies*" (HAGIAZO - to make holy, consecrate) is Jesus Christ. It is through his sacrifice on the cross that the repentant believer becomes sanctified (Heb. 10:10,14,29).

#### 1 Corinthians 6

11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.  
(NKJV)

As for the ones who are "*sanctified*" (HAGIAZO - to make holy, consecrate), these are the people who have repented of their sins and have confessed Christ as their Savior. People can NEVER sanctify themselves by any type of work, good deeds, self-inflicted hardships, religious devotion, or experience, for we are all sinners and have become enemies of the Lord God (Rom. 5:8). It was necessary for someone outside of ourselves to come and save us from the coming judgment by taking upon himself our just punishment, and that is exactly what Christ has done.

### Galatians 3

10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them."

11 Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "He who through faith is righteous shall live";

12 but the law does not rest on faith, for "He who does them shall live by them."

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree"--

(RSV)

We can also see in this verse the "oneness" between the Savior and those he saved. Jesus identifies himself with the Redeemed so deeply that:

v.11 ... he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

He IS NOT "*ashamed*" (EPAISCHUNOMAI - to feel shame) to call them "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS - a brother, literally or figuratively). Jesus knows what we are like, the depth of our sins, and yet he draws close to the sinner and, through repentance, he sanctifies him and makes him a child of God (1 John 3:1). May we never forget that we are "one" with the Lord Jesus.

<sup>12</sup>saying,

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the assembly I will sing in praise of you."

In verse twelve, the author of this epistle gives proof that Jesus is not ashamed of his redeemed and quotes Ps. 22:22. The Messiah will "*proclaim*" (APAGGELLO - to announce, declare, report) your name to my brothers. Here we see that the Son will proclaim the name of the Father first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Jesus spread the Good News of the coming kingdom of the Father and called for repentance to be able to enter into it (Mat. 4:17, Mark 6:12; Luke 13:3). We also see that the Lord Jesus sometimes openly thanked the Father before his disciples (Luke 10:21; John 11:41). Jesus also sang the praises of his Father (Mat. 26:29,30; Rom. 15:9).

<sup>13</sup> And again,  
"I will trust in him."

And again,  
"Behold, I and the children God has given me."

In verse thirteen, we see that the Son totally confided in his Father. The author quotes Isaiah 8:17 and writes: I will "*trust*" (PEITHO - to convince, to rely, to trust) in him (God the Father). This truth was probably exemplified when Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but yours be done." May all true believers come to a point in their lives where they can also trust in the Lord God with all their hearts! He then quotes Isaiah 8:18 which manifests the heart of Christ towards the redeemed. He is proud to say: "Look, these are the children that the Father has "*given*" (DIDOMI - to give, bestow, bring forth) to me." Again, we see that the redeemed have been granted the right to become children of God, for they are a gift of the Father to the Son!

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since the children share in blood and flesh, he also in like manner shared in these *same things*, in order that through death he could destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and could set free these who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all their lives.

In verses fourteen and fifteen, we are given reasons why the incarnation HAD TO BE. The first reason is that the children of Adam have one thing that they all "*share*" (KOINONEO - to share with others, partakers). It does not matter who you are or where you come from, men and women all share in "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood, bloodshed) and "*flesh*" (SARX - the body as opposed to the spirit). We are all human beings with bodies made of flesh and blood.

Because the children of Adam all share in this, the Messiah "*in like manner*" (PARAPLESIOS - similarly, likewise) also shared in the same things. He became fully man, with all its human limitations. He needed to eat, rest, and sleep just like you and me. He did this so he could fully understand (and actually LIVE) what it meant to be a man, not only in his flesh and blood but also with all the temptations the flesh is subjected to. A second reason why Jesus took on flesh is the following:

v.14 ... in order that through death he could destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil

He lived in the flesh and also died in the flesh. In his "*death*" (THANATOS - death, literal or figurative) he could "*destroy*" (KATARGEIO - to render useless, abolish, destroy) the one who has the "*power*" (KRATOS - dominion, power, strength) over death. We all know that this is the "*devil*" (DIABOLOS - false accuser, slanderer, the devil). Jesus, as the Son of God, already had power over the fallen angels. We see this throughout every encounter Jesus has with evil spirits. It is as the second Adam (fully man) that Jesus, this time, had victory over the fallen evil spirits.

<sup>15</sup> and could set free these who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all their lives.

A third reason is given in verse fifteen, and that is to be able to "*set free*" (APALLASSO - release, remove, deliver) the people who through "*fear of death*" (PHOBOS THANATOS - to be frightened or alarmed by death remained subject to "*slavery*" (DOULEIA - slavery, bondage) throughout all their lives. In other words, because they feared death, it had power over them. They were in the grips of their spiritual enemy. The victory of Christ over death through his perfect sacrifice and resurrection liberated them from this fear. They now knew where they would be once they died, and that was with their Lord and Savior and not in hell!

#### John 5

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.  
(NKJV)

The following statement is incredible and worthy of our deepest thoughts.

<sup>16</sup> For surely he is not concerned with angels, but he is concerned with the descendants of Abraham.

Have you ever thought that there is NO salvation for angels who have rebelled against God? On the other hand, the plan for redemption was revealed in the Garden of Eden just after Adam and Eve rebelled against the Lord God. Why is there mercy for the children of Adam while there is none for the fallen angels? The word "*concern*" (EPILAMBANOMAI - to seize, lay hold of) gives the idea of coming to help someone. In other words, God the Son did not come to the aid of the fallen angels, but he did come to the aid of the "*descendants*" (SPERMA - something sown, seed) of Abraham. The reason for this lies in the heart of God. Whatever the answer is, all true believers should rejoice because God DID come to their aid through the sacrifice of the Son on the cross.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore he was obligated to be made like his brothers in all *respects*, in order that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things relating to God, in order to make atonement for the sins of the people.

Verse seventeen seems to be a conclusion of what has been said so far in this section concerning Jesus Christ becoming flesh and blood. The word "*therefore*" (HOTHEN - whereby, where upon) introduces the natural conclusion or thought of what has been written. Jesus was "*obligated*" (OPHEILO - to be under the obligation of, the goodwill due) to be "*made*" (HOMOIOO - to assimilate, resemble) like his "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS - a brother near or remote) in ALL aspects. In ALL ASPECTS, Jesus became a real person. He went through all the stages of growing up and felt the emotions humans have. He lived as a real person in a real family in a real society and was obligated to live under the rules of both his Father and his society.

v.17 ... , in order that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things relating to God, in order to make atonement for the sins of the people.

The reason why he was fully man is given. It was in order that he could "*become*" (GINOMAI - to cause to be, to become) a "*high priest*" (ARCHIEREUS - high priest, chief priest). Jesus became the high priest pertaining to the things of "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer). The writer gives us three facets of his priesthood.

The first is that he would be "*merciful*" (ELEEMON - compassionate, merciful). We see the mercy and compassion of Christ throughout the four Gospels. Just in the eighth chapter of Matthew, we can see his mercy in the following:

- He cleansed a leper (8:1-4)
- He healed the centurion's servant (5-13)
- He healed Peter's mother-in-law (8:14,15)
- He healed the multitudes (8:16-22)
- He delivered two demon possessed men (8:28-34)

His mercy also healed all those who repent, they are now forgiven of all their trespasses (Mark 3:28).

The second aspect is that this high priest is "*faithful*" (PISTOS - trustworthy, trustful, believe). In other words, you can fully trust Jesus because he is perfectly truthful and honest. He does what he says and says what he does. There is no lie to be found in him.

#### John 8

45 But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

46 Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

(RSV)

Jesus is faithful (Rev. 1:5; 19:11-13). He will never let you down or turn his back on you. He will always be there to lift you up when you have no more strength to carry on.

v. ...17 in order to make atonement for the sins of the people.

This is the third aspect of our heavenly high priest. He made "*atonement*" (HILASKOMAI - to atone for sin, reconciliation, to make propitiation for) for the "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offense, a violation of the divine law) of the people. The writer of Hebrews will write about this later on in a more extensive manner. What is meant here is that Christ became the perfect sin offering. That is why John the Baptist was able to tell others the following about Jesus.

#### John 1

29 The day after, John sees Jesus coming to him and says, See, here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

(BBE)

John 1

36 And looking at Jesus while he was walking he said, See, there is the Lamb of God!

(BBE)

In the book of Revelation, there are 18 references to Jesus, who is the Lamb of God! Jesus has set believers free from the condemnation of their sins (Rom. 8:1). He does (and continues to) intercede perfectly for us as our high priest.

<sup>18</sup> For in that which he himself suffered *when he* was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

This is the fourth reason why Christ became fully man. Because he became "flesh and blood", he "*suffered*" (PASCHO - passion, suffer, vex, to suffer sadly) when he was "*tempted*" (PEIRAZO - prove, entice, tempt). You see, God cannot be tempted (James 1:13). He is pure and holy in every way. To be able to "feel" what it is really like to be tempted, he had to become "flesh and blood". So Jesus suffered when he was tempted. Because of this, he is able to "*help*" (DUNAMAI - to be able, be of power) those who are tempted. He is not some kind of God who is so far away that he has no clue what it means to suffer as a human. Quite the opposite! He became a man to be able to be compassionate and come to the aid of those who are tempted by sin! What an unbelievable Savior we have in Christ Jesus!

## *07 - Jesus is superior to Moses*

Hebrews 3:1-6

Therefore, holy brothers, sharers in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, <sup>2</sup> who was faithful to the one who appointed him, as Moses also *was* in his household. <sup>3</sup> For this one is considered worthy of greater glory than Moses, inasmuch as the one who builds it has greater honor than the house. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but the one who built all *things is* God. <sup>5</sup> And Moses *was* faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony to the things that would be spoken, <sup>6</sup> but Christ *was faithful* as a son over his house, whose house we are, if we hold fast to our confidence and the hope we can be proud of.

(LEB)

The word "therefore" is a link with what has been discussed in the previous section. Since Jesus made atonement for our sins and has delivered believers from the fear of death, we are to consider the following thought in relationship with Jesus and Moses.

The author begins by calling the believers "*holy*" (HAGIOS - sacred, pure, blameless) "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS - a brother, literal or figurative). This is what people who have placed their absolute faith in Christ have become in the eyes of the Father - they are holy. The apostle Paul confirms this:

Colossians 1

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight--

(NKJV)

He also declares that believers are "*sharers*" (METOCHOS - a sharer, partaker, partner) in a "*heavenly*" (EPOURANIOS - above the sky, celestial) "*calling*" (KLESIS - an invitation, a calling). We have been called to partake in redemption, which grants believers to participate in God's eternal plan of salvation. In all humility, we must recognize that we

have become the most important people on earth! Our worth IS NOT in ourselves but in what Christ has done for us. Since we are now "in Christ" (Gal. 3:26) we share in his holiness.

v.1 ... consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession

The author of Hebrews desires his readers to "*consider*" (KATANOEEO - to observe fully, behold, consider) the person of Jesus. We have already been taught that he is the creator, that he is superior to angels, that he is the Savior, and that he is our High priest. He is also the "*apostle*" (APOSTOLOS - a delegate, ambassador, a person sent) of our "*confession*" (HOMOLOGIA - acknowledgement, profession). He is the perfect herald sent by the Father to bring the message of the "Good News" to the children of Adam, first the Jews, then the Gentiles.

<sup>2</sup> who was faithful to the one who appointed him, as Moses also *was* in his household.

The first thing we see about this perfect messenger was that Jesus was "*faithful*" (PISTOS - trustworthy, faithful, true) to the one (the Father) who "*appointed*" (POIEO - to make or do) him. From his abandoning his glorious state at the right hand of the Father to partake in the "flesh and blood" and become a man to sacrificing himself at the cross for the benefit of those who would believe-Jesus was faithful in all things. He always did the will of the Father, as the Bible attests (Luke 2:49; Mat. 26:42; Heb. 10:7,9). Notice that it is the Father who "*appointed*" the Son for his ministry among us. Just as it was the Holy Spirit who guided the Son during his lifetime on earth (Mat. 4:1; Luke 4:1).

The writer compares the faithfulness of Christ to Moses. Moses was faithful to his "*household*" (OIKOS - a dwelling, a family, home, house). Moses was truly faithful to his fellow Jews. We see him intercede in favor of them before the Lord God time after time. He came to their rescue when they sinned and irritated the Lord God, who wanted to bring judgment upon them. Moses even refused that God would make his seed a great nation because he wanted to do away with the Israelites in the desert.

Exodus 32

9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people;

10 now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation."

11 But Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

(RSV)

We may say that the faithfulness of Moses towards his people is probably the greatest human example found in the Bible. But the faithfulness of Christ is far superior to this.

<sup>3</sup> For this one is considered worthy of greater glory than Moses, inasmuch as the one who builds it has greater honor than the house.

Jesus is to be "*considered*" (AXIOO - counted worthy, deemed fit,) worthy of a "*greater*" (PLEISTOS - the largest number, great, more) "*glory*" (DOXA - glory, dignity, praise) than Moses. There are many reasons why the glory of Christ is not to be compared to the glory of Moses, and the writer gives one.

v.3 ... inasmuch as the one who builds it has greater honor than the house.

The argument is the following: Who gets the greater praise or glory, the "*house*" (OIKOS - a dwelling, a family, a home, a house) or the one who "*builds*" (KATASKEUAZO - to construct, build, make) the house? Is it not the architect of the house that gets the glory? Moses only took care of the house (Israel), but he was not the maker of the house.

<sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but the one who built all *things* is God.

This is the author's conclusion about the "*house*" (God's people). A human house is built by a person. The person decides the location of the house, its features, and how it is to be constructed. But there is one who "*built*" (KATASKEUAZO - to construct, build, make) all things, and that is God. Since God is the ultimate builder of all things, he is the one who should receive glory and praise.

<sup>5</sup> And Moses *was faithful* in all his house as a servant, for a testimony to the things that would be spoken, <sup>6</sup> but Christ *was faithful* as a son over his house, whose house we are, if we hold fast to our confidence and the hope we can be proud of.

The author explains why Jesus is far superior to Moses in these two verses. He first explains that Moses was "*faithful*" (PISTOS - trustworthy, faithful, true) in all his house and in all his dealings with the people of God. We know that he persevered for 40 years in the desert and faced great adversity, even to the point where people wanted to kill him and get a new leader! But Moses did this as a "*servant*" (THERAPEUI - a menial attendant, a servant). This WAS NOT his household; it was the Lord's! His faithfulness towards the Jews was to be a "*testimony*" (MARTURION - evidence given, witness) to the things that would be "*spoken*" (LALEO - to talk, speak, say). It seems that the faithfulness of Moses was to reflect a greater faithfulness that was to come. In this sense, Moses was a "type" of the coming Messiah.

<sup>6</sup> but Christ *was faithful* as a son over his house, whose house we are, if we hold fast to our confidence and the hope we can be proud of.

Just as Moses was faithful as a SERVANT over the house of the Lord God. Jesus was faithful as a "SON" (HUIOS - a son, remote or near) over his house. The two types of faithfulness are different, one is much greater than the other. Moses was a servant while Jesus was the "owner" of the house.

The author finally makes it very clear what this house is. "Whose house we are", the "we" that is spoken of refers to the believers in Christ Jesus. We are the house of God. ALL true believers are part of the house of God. Men and women, Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 10:12) there is no more difference, for we are all in Christ.

v.6 ... if we hold fast to our confidence and the hope we can be proud of.

Who is the true "house" of God? Is it anyone who says he believes? Is it for Sunday church goers who may give lip service but not their heart? The author describes the "house" of God as having three distinct characteristics. The first is that they have

"*confidence*" (PARRHESIA - assurance, boldness, confidence). They have placed their confidence in the sacrifice of Christ. They have repented and have asked Christ to save them from the coming judgment. The second is that they possess "*hope*" (ELPIS - to anticipate usually with pleasure). Their hope in life is the Lord Jesus, and they wait for his return. Third, is that they are "*proud*" (KAUCHEMA - the glory of, rejoicing, boasting) of the hope that they have. These are the ones who are truly the "house" of God. If one does not have confidence, hope, and pride in the Lord, then they are not his.

### John 3

36 He who has faith in the Son has eternal life; but he who has not faith in the Son will not see life; God's wrath is resting on him.

(BBE)

## 08 - A warning from the desert

Hebrews 3:7-19

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,  
“Today, if you hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
in the day of testing in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup>where your fathers tested *me* by trial  
and saw my works <sup>10</sup>for forty years.  
Therefore I was angry with this generation,  
and I said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,  
and they do not know my ways.’  
<sup>11</sup> As I swore in my anger,  
‘*They will never enter into my rest.*’”

<sup>12</sup>Watch out, brothers, lest there be in some of you an evil, unbelieving heart, *with the result that you fall away from the living God.* <sup>13</sup>But encourage one another *day by day*, as long as it is called “today,” so that *none of you become hardened* by the deception of sin. <sup>14</sup>For we have become partners of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of *our* commitment steadfast until the end, <sup>15</sup>*while it is said*,

“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

<sup>16</sup>For who, *when they heard it*, were disobedient? Surely *it was* not all who went out from Egypt through Moses? <sup>17</sup>And with whom was he angry *for forty years*? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup>And to whom did he swear *they would* not enter into his rest, except those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup>And *so* we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

(LEB)

In this section, the writer will bring to mind a terrible warning that is to be found in the story of the Israelites when they were wandering in the desert. I believe that we need to understand that NOT ALL the Jewish people that came out of Egypt were true

believers in the Lord God. It is the same thing today. NOT ALL people who are part of a church are true believers. If we do not understand this, then we will come to dangerously false conclusions. There is ONE MAIN point in this section, which is the following: If the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, don't turn your back on his prompting you to repent.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,  
“Today, if you hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
in the day of testing in the wilderness,

The word "*therefore*" (DIO - through which thing, consequently) links this section with the one before it. Since the Son is the head of the house, we ought to be very attentive to his authority. The phrase: "*just as the Holy Spirit says*" is very important. The author of Hebrews declares that it is the Holy Spirit who is the author of the Sacred Scriptures. These chosen people are the instruments through which the Holy Spirit inspires them to write what we today call the Bible. There are different authors of different books, which make up the sixty-six books of the Bible. Each writer has his own personality and writing style, but they were guided to write exactly what God wanted them to. So what did the Holy Spirit say?

v.7 ... “Today, if you hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
in the day of testing in the wilderness,

First, we see the urgency of the message because it is written "*today*" (SEMERON - on this day, now, today). This warning should not be put off until tomorrow, for we do not know what tomorrow will bring or even if we will be alive! Today is the day on which we are called to make a decision. It is written "*if*". It is conditional. You might or might not "*hear*" (AKOUO - to hear, come to the ears, understand) his voice. What are we to do if we hear the voice of God calling us to repentance? We are told to not "*harden*" (SKLERUNO - to indurate, to be stubborn) your "*hearts*" (KARDIA - the heart, thoughts, and feelings of the mind). We are told to be very careful and not to reject the warning of the Lord God. This reminds me of Cain, who hardened his heart when God told him to be very careful about his attitude concerning his offering that was rejected.

Genesis 4

5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

6 The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?

7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain said to Abel his brother, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.

(RSV)

Cain did not listen to God's warning; he went off and later killed his brother and was judged and marked by God because of this (Gen. 4:15). The author gives us a different account by which we should take heed and not harden our hearts when we are visited - he speaks of the Jewish people when they erred in the desert for forty years. He speaks of the rebellion in the desert. There were a few of them, but one stood out, and it is found in Numbers 21. People became impatient and spoke against God and Moses. In his anger, the Lord sent serpents who bit people, and they died. Only if they repented and looked at the serpent on a pole made by Moses, would they be cured and live. This was a "type" of the Christ to come who would hang on a cross and if people repented and looked to Christ for their salvation, they too would be saved.

What is meant by "*the day of testing*"? Unless we take time to read, we might think that the day of "*testing*" (PEIRASMOS - adversity, temptation) had to do with the Jewish people who went through this terrible judgment - but the testing was not on their part. As we see in the following verses, it was God who the Israelites were putting to the test!

<sup>9</sup> where your fathers tested *me* by trial  
and saw my works <sup>10</sup> *for* forty years.

Therefore I was angry with this generation,  
and I said, 'They always go astray in their heart,  
and they do not know my ways.'

Here it is written that it was your "*fathers*" (PATER - a father near or remote) who "*tested*" (PEIRASMOS - adversity, temptation) ME and that it was the Lord God who was being "attacked" by his own people. They grumbled against God and were once more dissatisfied with him. God states that they had seen his "*works*". (ERGON - to work, toil, labor) for forty years. They had seen ALL the wonders and care of the Lord for them. From being delivered from slavery to always having food and provision made for them. Even their enemies could not stand before them! After all that time and all they had seen, their hearts (not all of them) were hardened and they rebelled. In other words, they bit the hand that fed them!

v. 10 ... Therefore I was angry with this generation,  
and I said, 'They always go astray in their heart,  
and they do not know my ways.'

God became "*angry*" (PROSOCHTHIZO - to be vexed with something, to be grieved at) with this "*generation*" (GENEA - a generation, an age, time) and he explains why. There were two main points concerning the hearts of his people. The first is that they "*always*" (AEI - ever, always) "*go astray*" (PLANAO - to go astray, err, wander) in their "*heart*" (KARDIA - the thoughts and feelings of the mind). In other words, they were not emotionally attached to their God. He was not their treasure. We saw this repeatedly. They rebelled over and over again. The second point is that they did not "*know*" (GINOSKO - to know, be aware of, understand) my "*ways*" (HODOS - a road, a journey). They did not understand the mind of God. Moses and Aaron taught the ways of the Lord, yet the hearts of the people were hard and their ears were deaf. The point is that God had given them ALL evidence of his love and care and they did not respond favorably towards him.

<sup>11</sup> As I swore in my anger,  
*'They will never enter into my rest.'*"

Because people (not all) hardened their hearts towards God's love and care, he reacted and "*swore*" (OMNUO - to swear, take an oath) in his "*anger*" (ORGE - violent passion, anger, indignation). God's anger is not like man's, for it is holy and just. This is what he swore: They will "*never enter*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, to come in) into my "*rest*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, abode, rest). Those whose hearts were hardened and

were bitten and DID NOT look towards the serpent on the pole to be saved, died and did not enter into the Promise Land.

<sup>12</sup> Watch out, brothers, lest there be in some of you an evil, unbelieving heart, *with the result that you fall away*<sup>[f]</sup> from the living God.

This is the example given. Make sure that you are not like one of those who were loved by God and turned away from him in your heart. Let us not forget that ALL people were invited out of Egypt. Some came along but did not truly believe. It is the same today, the author writes. You may be "part" of God's people (the Jews) but have a heart that rejects this.

This is the warning "*Watch out*" (BLEPO - to look at, behold, take heed). And what did they have to watch out for - an "*evil*" (PONEROS - hateful, evil, vicious) and "*unbelieving*" (APAISTIA - faithlessness, disbelief, unbelief) "*heart*" (KARDIA - the thoughts and feelings of the mind). They went with the crowd, enjoyed being liberated from slavery, saw the miracles of God, tasted his care and love, yet there was no true and sincere love for him in their hearts. They enjoyed the gifts, but not the Giver!

v.12 ... *with the result that you fall away from the living God.*

There are always consequences to what we do or do not do. No one can mock God and get away with it, as we see in the following verse:

Gal. 6

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.  
(NKJV)

The result, or consequence, of having a hardened heart (not truly loving and believing in God) is that you "*fall away*" (APHISTEMI - to remove, desist, depart) from the living God. At one point, your unbelieving heart will simply drag you away from the living God. You will be like an anchor that is dropped into the sea simply to enter the depths of the waters.

<sup>13</sup> But encourage one another *day by day*, as long as it is called "today," so that *none of you become hardened* by the deception of sin.

Always keep in mind that this letter was written to Jewish people, some of whom were believers and others were not. Just as Paul's letters were written to be read (Col. 4:16) in the church gatherings where most people were true believers and others were not.

The author asks that people would "*encourage*" (PARAKALEO - to call near, invite, comfort) one another "*day by day*". This literally means "*by each day*". Not knowing who is truly saved or not. Whoever had an open heart for the Lord were to encourage others in the ways of the Lord. The aim of this is so that none of you become "*hardened*" (SKLERUNO - to indurate, render stubborn) because of the "*deception*" (APATE - delusion, deceitful) of sin. May all true believers do the same. Never take for granted because someone comes to the church meetings, that he or she is automatically a child of God-never!

<sup>14</sup> For we have become partners of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of *our* commitment steadfast until the end, <sup>15</sup> *while it is said*,

"Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

The author describes who the true believers are. This may also be a "wake-up" call for those who believe they are, while in reality they are not. This is proof that you do not have a hardened heart towards the Lord God. If you say you have "*become*" (GINOMAI - to cause to be, to become) "*partners*" (MOTOCHOS - participant, fellow partner) of Christ, in other words, if you say you are "born-again" and have passed from death unto life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14) then we should "*hold fast*" (KATECHO - to hold down fast, keep firm, hold fast) to the "*beginning*" (ARCHE - a commencement, beginning, origin) of our "*commitment*" (HUPOSTASIS - support, assurance, confidence). We should be "*steadfast*" (BEBAIOS - to stabilize, establish, firm) until the end. This is sometimes called the doctrine of perseverance, which says that a person who is truly saved will remain walking with the Lord until the very end. They will "fall," but they will repent, rise up once more, and persevere in their faith. This is the earnest pursuit of our assurance in Christ.

Please note that the author again quotes Ps. 95:7b,8. He desires to make this the central point of this section. It is of the utmost importance that those who say they are believers in the Messiah ask themselves if this is actually true. For if it is not true, then they will simply be judged as those who were in the desert were.

<sup>16</sup> For who, *when they heard it*, were disobedient? Surely *it was* not all who went out from Egypt through Moses? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he angry *for* forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear *they would* not enter into his rest, except those who were disobedient?

The author closes this warning from the past with three questions. The first one is found in verse sixteen.

<sup>16</sup> For who, *when they heard it*, were disobedient? Surely *it was* not all who went out from Egypt through Moses?

Who were the ones who "*heard it*" (AKOUO - to hear, to understand)? Was it not those who had a hardened heart in the desert? Who were the ones who were "*disobedient*" (PARAPIKRAINO - exasperate, provoke)? Again, it was those who provoked God with their unbelieving hearts. The author goes on to say that it was "*not all*" who were like this.

The second question dealt with God's judgment.

<sup>17</sup> And with whom was he angry *for* forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?

So with whom was God "*angry*" (PROSOCHTHIZO - to be vexed with something or someone, to be displeased with) for forty years? The answer is given, it was with those who "*sinned*" (HAMARTANO - to miss the mark, to sin). The ones whose hearts were hardened towards God. They were the ones whose "*dead bodies*" (KOLON - a limb of the body, a carcass, a dead body) fell in the "*wilderness*" (EREMOS - lonesome, waste, desert). Only the ones who disbelieved God were judged and died on that day. Those who believed stayed alive. It is so evident that this is the gospel story! Believe in

Christ's sacrifice, repent of your sins, and you will be saved from the coming judgment. If you reject the Lord's call to repent, then you shall be judged for all eternity.

<sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear *they would* not enter into his rest, except those who were disobedient?

This is the third question: seeing their unrepentant hearts, the Lord "*swore*" (OMNUO - to swear, take an oath, to promise) that they would "*not enter*" (EISERCHOMAI - to go out or come in, to enter) into his "*rest*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, a resting place, abode). That is a reference to the land of "Milk and Honey". So who did not enter God's rest - those who were "*disobedient*" (APEITHEO - to disbelieve, obey not).

<sup>19</sup> And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

This verse needs to be understood so we can have the right understanding of this section. The author is NOT saying that you can lose your salvation. What he is saying is that you never had salvation because of your hardened heart towards God's warning, concerning not truly believing in what we call the "Good News". The unbelievers, those who had a hardened heart, were "*not able*" (DUNAMAI - to be able, possible, be of power) to "*enter*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in, go in) because of their "*unbelief*" (APAISTIA - faithlessness, disbelief, unbelief). Remember what Jesus said:

#### Matthew 7

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

(NKJV)

To all of us, the warning is given. Do we truly, honestly believe that Christ is the Messiah? Have we repented of our sins and asked Christ to save us personally from the wrath to come? Are we true disciples of Christ?

## 09 - *Jesus and his rest*

Hebrew 4:1-10

Therefore let us fear, *while there* remains a promise of entering into his rest, that none of you appear to fall short of *it*.<sup>2</sup> *For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as those also did, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united with those who heard it in faith.*<sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter into rest, just as he has said,

“As I swore in my anger,  
‘*They will never enter into my rest.*’”

And yet these works have been accomplished from the foundation of the world.<sup>4</sup> For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh *day* in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works,”<sup>5</sup> and in this *passage* again, ‘*They will never enter into my rest.*’”<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains *for* some to enter into it, and the ones to whom the good news was proclaimed previously did not enter because of disobedience,<sup>7</sup> again he ordains a certain day, today, speaking by David after so long a time, just as had been said before,

“Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts.”

<sup>8</sup>For if Joshua had caused them to rest, he would not have spoken about another day after these *things*.<sup>9</sup> Consequently a sabbath rest remains for the people of God.<sup>10</sup> For the one who has entered into his rest has also himself rested from his works, just as God *did* from his own *works*.

(LEB)

In this section, the author will bring to mind the seriousness of not neglecting the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup>Therefore let us fear, *while there* remains a promise of entering into his rest, that none of you appear to fall short of *it*.

Have you noticed how often a section begins with the word "Therefore"? As I said, these are "connecting words" that link one section with the following one. The author writes: let us "*fear*" (PHOBEO - to be alarmed, afraid, fear). Being in fear is a mindset. It is desired that people understand the eternal importance of coming to the Lord in repentance. Until this is done, one should fear since he does not know when he will die, and once one passes from life to death, the opportunity to repent has vanished. The author speaks of the "*promise*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise). Who made this promise? Evidently, it is God who promises salvation. What does this promise contain? It concerns the "*entering*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter in, to go in) into his "*rest*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, abode, rest). The rest that God had promised to the Israelites was the Promised Land, the land of milk and honey. His present rest is no longer a place, but rather a person - the Messiah. The hope of the writer is that none of you "*appear*" (DOKEO - to think, seem, suppose) to "*fall short*" (HUSTEREO - to be inferior, to fall short of) of it. It was his heart's desire that his fellow countrymen would not turn away from the call they had received to enter God's rest given through the Messiah Jesus Christ. This should be the concern of every true believer - hoping and praying that their loved ones would come to a saving faith in Christ.

<sup>2</sup> *For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as those also did, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united with those who heard it in faith.*

In this verse, we see what human element is needed to be able to enter into God's rest. The author refers to "Good News" that has been "proclaimed" (EUAGGELIZO-to announce, proclaim). We can say that this is God's part, the "Good News" of salvation in Jesus had been accomplished as promised. The author writes, "just as those also did." Whom does he refer to? We will see that he refers to those who also heard the "*message*" (LOGOS - something said, speech, talk). Why is there a difference between "us" and "they"? Why are there two different groups of people? Why did the "Good News" not "*benefit*" (OPHELEO - to be useful, to benefit, prevail) the second group? The answer is simple. The people of the second group were not "*united*" (SUGKERANNUMI - to combine, mix with) with the first group who "*heard it*" (AKOE - hearing, ear, which you heard) in "*faith*" (PISTEUO - to have faith in, to entrust, to be persuaded of). This is the central point and it must be understood. Both heard the

"Good News". One group received it by faith, and the other had no faith in the gospel message. Things have not changed. It is the same reason why some are forgiven and are clothed in Christ's righteousness, while the others are still condemned in their sins. They have no true faith in Christ.

<sup>3</sup>For we who have believed enter into rest, just as he has said,

“As I swore in my anger,  
‘They will never enter into my rest.’”

And yet these works have been accomplished from the foundation of the world.

It is important to understand that throughout his epistle the author will continue to speak about two groups of people - the ones who are saved and the ones who are not. If we do not grasp this fact, then we will be confused in regards to what is written. The author writes: for WE "*who have believed*" (PISTUEUO - to have faith in, to entrust, to be persuaded of). The first group (the WE) has believed, and so they "*enter into*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, arise, come in) God's "*rest*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, abode, rest). The words "just as he said" refer to the promise God had given concerning THE OTHER GROUP (those who had no faith).

v.3 ... “As I swore in my anger,  
‘They will never enter into my rest.’”

Because some of the Israelites, who were in the desert, DID NOT BELIEVE in the Lord. Even after all the miracles he had done for them, they rebelled against his leading them into the Promised Land. At one point, God "*swore*" (OMNUO - to swear, take an oath) in his "*anger*" (ORGE - punishment, anger, indignation) that they would NEVER "*enter into*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, arise, come in) my "*rest*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, abode, come in). The author is quoting from Ps. 95:10,11.

v.3 ... And yet these works have been accomplished from the foundation of the world.

This part of verse three is very difficult to place within the context of what has just been written. Theologians disagree with its true meaning. It may refer to God's rest (which he would later offer to his people) that had been "*accomplished*" (GINOMAI - to

cause to be) from the "*foundation*" (KATABOLE - conceive, lay down a foundation) of the world. When God "rested" on the seventh day of creation, it may have been at that point where he decided to also offer "rest" for those who would honestly believe in what he would later proclaim. These are my thoughts concerning this phrase and should not be taken as the "gospel truth".

<sup>4</sup>For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works," <sup>5</sup>and in this *passage* again, '*They will never enter into my rest.*'"

This brings a little more light to what he has written in the preceding verses. The author writes about the "*seventh day*" of creation. He quotes from Gen. 2:2 that "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer) "*rested*" (KATAPAUO - to settle down, cease, rest) from all his works, which is the creation process. Please note that God did not need a "rest" because he was tired; rather, this means that God ceased or ended the creation process. He brings this "resting" figure of creation and compares it to the "rest" that the unbelieving and rebellious Israelites "*will never enter*" again. This is a quote from Ps. 95:10,11. It is evident that the author is trying to alert the Jewish people he is writing to.

<sup>6</sup>Since therefore it remains *for* some to enter into it, and the ones to whom the good news was proclaimed previously did not enter because of disobedience,

The good news is that the "rest" of the Lord God is once more offered. Because of this, some will "*enter*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, arise, come in) into it. Amen to that! Then a new warning is given. Yes, the offer to enter God's rest is still available, but remember that "good news" (the offer to enter God's rest) was also proclaimed in the past, BUT they did not "*enter*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in) BECAUSE of "*disobedience*" (APEITHEIA - disbelief, disobedience, unbelief). I believe this verse would have been better served if the translators would have used either disbelief or unbelief. By using the word "disobedience," one might come to think that if we disobey God, we will never enter his rest. If this were the case, then NO ONE would enter his rest because EVERYONE disobeys God in one way or another - remember what Paul wrote:

Romans 7

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.  
20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.  
21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.  
22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.  
23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.  
24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?  
25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.  
(NKJV)

In verse seven we see the author introduces the grace of God. It is not because God's people failed in the desert that he closes the door to his rest for all times.

<sup>7</sup> again he ordains a certain day, today, speaking by David after so long a time, just as had been said before,  
"Today, if you hear his voice,  
do not harden your hearts."

The author speaks of a "*certain*" (TIS - some or any person or thing) day, and that day is "*today*" (SEMERON - this day, now). The writer refers to what King David had prophetically written in Ps. 95:7b,8. Again, "*today*" (SEMERON, this day, now) is mentioned. We see the emphasis brought forth, for it is imperative to repent unto the Lord to be able to enter his rest. If today you "*hear*" (AKOUO - to hear, come to the ears) his "*voice*" (PHONE - noise, sound, voice) DO NOT "*harden*" (SKLERONU - to indurate, render stubborn, harden) your "*hearts*" (KARDIA - the thoughts and feelings of the mind). As in the desert, the possibility to refuse, reject or ignore the "good news" of entering God's rest still exists. People have to willingly accept God's offer of salvation in Christ Jesus. Jesus spoke about this:

#### John 5

39 You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me;  
40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.  
(RSV)

The invitation to enter God's rest is still offered today. Some have heard the offer and have answered the invitation, while others have hardened their hearts and turned it down. Remember what Jesus said:

John 7

37 On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus got up and said in a loud voice, If any man is in need of drink let him come to me and I will give it to him.

38 He who has faith in me, out of his body, as the Writings have said, will come rivers of living water.

39 This he said of the Spirit which would be given to those who had faith in him: the Spirit had not been given then, because the glory of Jesus was still to come.

(BBE)

May I ask if you have received this living water which brings eternal rest?

<sup>9</sup>Consequently a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God. <sup>10</sup>For the one who has entered into his rest has also himself rested from his works, just as God *did* from his own *works*.

The conclusion that the writer arrives at is that a Sabbath rest "*remains*" (APOLEIPO - to leave behind, remain, forsake). It is still offered and available. The door is open for all true believers to enter through. We all know that this "door" is the blessed Messiah. Jesus said:

John 10

9 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

(NKJV)

In verse ten, we see great news concerning this Sabbath rest that the Lord gives. It is written that the one who "*enters*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in) this rest also "*rests*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, abode, rest) from his "*works*" (ERGON - to work, toil, labor). The believer rests from his works just as God did from "*his*" (IDIOS - pertaining to self, one's own) works. In other words, just as God ceased, or brought to an end, the creation process, so does the person who enters into God's rest ALSO

ceases or bring to an end, his own works. The redeemed no longer have to do any kind of work to become righteous before the Lord God because the Messiah's righteousness has been transferred unto the believer, as Paul explains:

Romans 3

20 For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,

22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction;

23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ

Jesus,

(RSV)

## 10 - A warning against unbelief

Hebrews 4:11-13

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, let us make every effort to enter into that rest, in order that no one may fall in the same pattern of disobedience. <sup>12</sup>For the word of God *is* living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, both joints and marrow, and able to judge the reflections and thoughts of the heart. <sup>13</sup>And no creature is hidden in the sight of him, but all *things are* naked and laid bare to the eyes of him to whom *we must give our account*.

(LEB)

As we have seen in the past, the author begins this new section with the conjunction "therefore" that links what has been said to what will be taught. In our last section, we were taught that Jesus Christ is the ultimate rest for the true believer. If this is true (and it is), then the believer is to do the following.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, let us make every effort to enter into that rest, in order that no one may fall in the same pattern of disobedience.

"Us" are the people to whom this epistle is addressed. As we have seen, some were disciples of Christ and others were not. The author writes that people ought to make "*every effort*" (SPOUDAZO - to use speed, to make an effort). What has been written should not be taken lightly, and people should react quickly by responding positively to the Good News. The effort is aimed "*to enter*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, to come in) into that "*rest*" (KATAPAUSIS - reposing down, abode, rest). This is the "rest" that the Lord God gives to the repentant believer. As we have seen, it is a rest from all his work. The person enters God's salvation, which is found in Christ. Because he is "in Christ", he is no longer called to be perfect. Christ has become his perfection for we have received his righteousness (Rom. 3:21,22).

Colossians 1

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight (NKJV)

v.11 ... in order that no one may fall in the same pattern of disobedience.

It is imperative for any person not to neglect the salvation offered in Christ Jesus. Every effort should be made by the individual so he will not "*fall*" (PIPTO - to fall, to fail, to fall down) in the same "*pattern*" (HUPODEIGMA - a warning, an example, a pattern) of "*disobedience*" (APEITHEIA - disbelief, rebellious, unbelief). As I wrote in our last section, I would have preferred it if the translators would have chosen the word disbelief or unbelief since that flows better with the subject of having faith to enter God's rest. The author is referring to the Israelites in the desert who, time after time, turned their backs on the Lord God and did not believe in his promise to bring them safely into the Promise Land.

Today, people can also fall into the same pattern of unbelief. Most have heard the gospel story. The Messiah's birth is celebrated across the world. Each year we are reminded of the incarnation and celebrate his coming. Yet people, in general, would rather fill their lives with the things of the world than give their hearts to their Maker.

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God *is* living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, both joints and marrow, and able to judge the reflections and thoughts of the heart.

The author draws a picture of the One who all mankind will, one day, have to stand before. This should reinforce the thought that one should "make every effort" to enter into his rest. There are five main points that are brought forth concerning the Lord God.

The first is that the "*word*" (LOGOS - something said, speech, talk, word) of "*God*". (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer) is "*living*" (ZAO - to live, lively, to be in full vigor). This contrasts with the thought that God is like a statue or an idol who cannot hear or do anything for the person who approaches it (Isaiah 59:1). He is the living God and the very essence of life!

Jer. 10

10 But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation. (NKJV)

The second point is that he is "*active*" (ENERGES - active, effectual, powerful). One can be alive but without any power to do anything. Not so with the Lord God. Not only is he alive, but he is "active". He has the power to do as he pleases. There is no one nor anything that can stand in the way of God. When he decided to free his people from slavery, it was done. When he decided to open the Red Sea so his people could flee from Pharaoh's army, it was done. When people needed food in the desert, he fed them for 40 years. God is "active". He is powerful and his desire will always prevail.

The third point is that his word is "*sharper*" (TOMOTEROS - to cut, more keen, sharper) than any "*double edged*" (DISTOMOS-double-edged) sword. Have you ever tried to cut a tomato with a dull knife? If so, you can understand the picture that is given concerning the Lord's words, they are sharper than any double-edged "*sword*" (MACHAIRA - a knife, a sword). Knives usually have only one edge that is sharp, but the word of God is like a knife which has both of its edges as sharp as can be. A double-edged knife is much more effective than a single edged knife.

The fourth point is that it is "*piercing*" (DIIKNEOMAI - to reach through, penetrate, pierce). Nothing can stop the word of God from penetrating its target. The author gives examples of its effectiveness.

v. 12 ... and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, both joints and marrow

The word of God enters so deeply into the human heart even to the "*division*" (MERISMOS - a separation, dividing asunder) between the "*soul*" (PSUCHE - breath, spirit, soul) and the "*spirit*" (PNEUMA - a current of air, breath, the rational soul). As you can see, even in Greek, these two words are very difficult to differentiate. What is the true difference between the two? Not all theologians agree! But God knows the exact difference. The word of God is so piercing that it is able to divide both "*joints*" (HARMOS - an articulation of the body) and "*marrow*" (MUELOS - the marrow). Have you noticed that the first example deals with the metaphysical and the second example deals with the physical?

v. 12 ... and able to judge the reflections and thoughts of the heart.

The final point says that the word of God (which is God himself) is able to "*judge*" (KRITIKOS - decisive, discerner, relating to judging). One day the Lord God will judge everyone. There is no greater judge or court than his (Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). What God is able to judge, which no one else is able to are the "*reflections*" (ENTHUMESIS - deliberation, thoughts, thinking) and the "*thoughts*" (ENNOIA - moral understanding, intent, mind) of the "*heart*" (KARDIA - the thoughts or feelings of the mind). Only God can "see" what truly lies in your heart and what you are thinking. He knows the true intent of every action you take. In other words, there is no hiding from God One day the truth will come out about you, and that is why we absolutely need to enter into God's rest in Christ Jesus

<sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden in the sight of him, but all *things are* naked and laid bare to the eyes of him to whom *we must give our account*.

Here we see the author's conclusion concerning God's omniscience. Because God knows ALL things, no "*creature*" (KTISIS - building, creation, creature) not a single person (not even you) is "*hidden*" (APHANES - non-apparent, that is not manifested, hidden) in the "*sight*" (ENOPION - in the face, in the presence) of him.

#### Jeremiah 23

23 "Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off?

24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD.

(RSV)

No creature can hide from the face of God, this we must understand:

#### Psalms 139

7 Where may I go from your spirit? how may I go in flight from you?

8 If I go up to heaven, you are there: or if I make my bed in the underworld, you are there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and go to the farthest parts of the sea;

10 Even there will I be guided by your hand, and your right hand will keep me.

11 If I say, Only let me be covered by the dark, and the light about me be night;

12 Even the dark is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day: for dark and light are the same to you.

(BBE)

What should we conclude concerning God's omniscience and omnipresence?

v.13 ... but all *things are* naked and laid bare to the eyes of him to whom *we must give our account*.

Since ALL THINGS, not just some things, are "*naked*" (GUMNOS - nude, naked) and "*laid bare*" (TRACHELIZO - to open, undercover, expose) to the eyes of God, to whom we MUST "*give our account*" (LOGOS - an account, reckoning, score). Please note that the word LOGOS is mainly used by John to describe the essential word of God, but it is also used for other meanings, like we see in this verse. Have you noticed that the writer speaks of OUR account. We will not be able to hide behind another person or blame someone else for our actions. God will deal with people individually, for we all have individual actions to answer for.

Our conclusion is that we need to enter God's rest in Jesus Christ or else we will have to give an account for ALL of our thoughts and actions and suffer the consequence. May all of my readers come to the cross to find safety from the coming judgment.

## 11 - *Jesus and the throne of grace*

Hebrews 4:14-16

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, *because we* have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but who has been tempted in all *things* in the same way, without sin. <sup>16</sup>Therefore let us approach with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

(LEB)

In our last section, we received the warning against not believing in the gospel news. We cannot hide from God, for he knows what lies in the deepest and hidden parts of our hearts. In this section we will see the goodness of the Lord God for those who do believe in his word.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, *because we* have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

Once more we see the conjunction with the word "*Therefore*", a word that links what has been said to what will be said. This section points to having a "*great*" (MEGAS - big, exceedingly great) "*high priest*" (ARCHIEREUS - the high priest, chief priest). The High Priest had a unique ministry towards God's people. He was the only one permitted to enter the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrificed lamb, which he sprinkled on the mercy seat and also offered incense. By doing this, he would procure forgiveness for the entire nation until the sacrifice had to be renewed a year later on the Day of Atonement.

The author affirms that all true believers have Jesus as a High Priest: "*we HAVE a high priest.*" Our high priest is not terrestrial but celestial for he has "*gone through*" (DIERCHOMAI - to traverse, pass through) the "*heavens*" (OURANOS - the sky, elevation, heaven). The author is probably referring to the Lord's ascension on the day he left his disciples.

Acts 1

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

(NKJV)

Our eternal high priest is named, for there can not be any confusion concerning this.

v. 14 ... Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

He is Jesus and is called the "Son" (HUIOS - a son, remote or figurative, kinship) of "God" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer). The divinity of Jesus is once more confirmed clearly. The Jewish clergy hated Jesus because he declared God to be his Father.

John 10

30 "I and My Father are one."

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

32 Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

33 The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

(NKJV)

What should true believers do now that Jesus, God's Son, has been designated as their High Priest? We are told to "*hold fast*" (KRATEO - to seize, to use strength, to retain) to our "*confession*" (HOMOLOGIA - acknowledgment, confession). In other words, we are to keep the faith that we have professed. We call this the perseverance of the saints. We are not to be "closet Christians" who hide their true identity, nor should we be

"chameleons" acting differently depending on who we are with! We are to "*hold fast*" and stay true to who we have become in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but who has been tempted in all *things* in the same way, without sin.

The author reminds us why we should hold fast to our confession. It is because we do not have a "*high priest*" (ARCHIEREUS - a high priest, chief priest) who is "*not able*" (DUNAMAI - to be able, be of power) to "*sympathize*" (SUMPATHEO - to feel sympathy, compassion) with our "*weaknesses*" (ASTHENEIA - feebleness of mind or body). We are reminded that Jesus, the Son of God, who is OUR high priest, not only understands but also sympathizes with the weakness of our flesh. He is approachable and has compassion for the difficulties we bear each day because of our flesh and fallen nature.

v.15 ... but who has been tempted in all *things* in the same way, without sin.

This is one of the wonders of incarnation. Jesus took on flesh so that he could become fully man but without the fallen nature of man. Because he lived in the flesh as we do, he has been "*tempted*" (PEIRAZO - to test, examine, entice) in "*all things*" (HOMOIOTES - resemblance, like as, similitude). He was tempted like we are tempted. But there is one immense difference. He was tempted but he was "*without*" (CHORIS - separately, apart from, without) "*sin*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offence). He battled the desire to sin and was victorious every single time. If he had not been "*without sin*," we would still be under the judgment of God since the sacrifice of Jesus would not have been perfect.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore let us approach with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The second thing we are told to do is to "*approach*" (PROSERCHOMAI - to approach, come near, visit) with "*confidence*" (PARRHESIA - all outspokenness, frankness) to the "*throne*" (THRONOS - a stately seat, power) of "*grace*" (CHARIS - graciousness of manner or act, gift). No longer we are to be frightened, when we approach the presence of God, as the Jews were in the desert when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments!

### Exodus 19

16 On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

17 Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

18 And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

(RSV)

We are no longer to tremble but are told to approach God with confidence. What are the reasons that are given for us to approach the Lord Jesus?

v.16 ... to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

First of all, because his throne is a throne of "*grace*" (CHARIS - graciousness of manner or act, gift). This is not a throne of judgment but of grace, where all repentant believers are welcome! Another reason is that we may "*receive*" (LAMBANO - to take, to seize, attain) "*mercy*" (ELEOS - compassion, mercy). Knowing and understanding our feeble stature as members of the fallen race of Adam, our perfect and eternal high priest receives us with grace, mercy, and compassion. This is where true believers go to receive all the "*help*" (BOETHEIA - aid, help) we need in our time of need.

Whatever our need is, we will always find a high priest who will stand by our side and offer what is needed to sooth our soul. May we never be afraid to approach our beloved savior, Jesus Christ. If we have a sincere and repentant heart, he will receive us into his presence. But be warned, we can not mock God (Gal. 6:7). Never forget that he perfectly knows what lies hidden in our hearts.

## 12 - *Jesus as High Priest*

Hebrews 5:1-10

<sup>1</sup>For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of people in the things relating to God, in order that he can offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins, <sup>2</sup>being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and led astray, since he himself also is surrounded by weakness, <sup>3</sup>and because of it he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins *for himself also, as well as for the people*. <sup>4</sup>And someone does not take for himself the honor, but is called by God, just as Aaron also *was*. <sup>5</sup>Thus also Christ did not glorify himself to become high priest, but the one who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you,”

<sup>6</sup>just as also in another *place* he says,

“You *are* a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek,”

<sup>7</sup>who in the days of his flesh offered up both prayers and supplications, with loud crying and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard as a result of his reverence. <sup>8</sup>Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered, <sup>9</sup>and being perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey him, <sup>10</sup>being designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

(LEB)

In our last section, the author had begun to explain the role of Jesus as our High Priest. He will continue so we can have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a high priest in the order of Melchizedek. In the first four verses, the author describes the human High Priest. In the next six verses, he describes Jesus as our divine high priest.

<sup>1</sup>For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of people in the things relating to God, in order that he can offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins,

The first thing we see in verse one is that "every high priest". There is no exception to the rule. Every single high priest is "*taken*" (LAMBANO - to take, to seize, attain) from among men. As with Aaron and his descendants, the priesthood is made up of the offspring of Adam and Eve. Flesh and blood as you and I. They are human beings and come with all that it entails. A second fact is that they are "*appointed*" (KATHISTEMI - to place down permanently). The one who does the appointing is the Lord God, for he set down the rules concerning this priesthood. They are appointed on "behalf of the people". Their main function deals with the people of God and their relationship with him. This is their job, it is their duty and ministry in life. They stand between God and his people, and they intercede for them in different ways. The third fact is that the high priest can "*offer*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, bring unto) the following to God. First are the "*gifts*" (DORON - a present, a sacrifice, an offering) and second, "*sacrifices*" (TAUSIA - sacrifice, the act or victim). You might wonder what the difference between a gift and a sacrifice is. A gift is a thanksgiving offering that manifests gratitude to God. A sacrifice is for the atonement of sins. I would like to note that the name "priest" is NEVER given to anyone in the New Testament. The reason is simple. In the Old Testament, priests offered sacrifices for the atonement of sins. In the New Testament, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) has done so once and for all (Heb. 10:10-14). Today, those who are called priests are falsely representing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup> being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and led astray, since he himself also is surrounded by weakness,

The author continues to describe the earthly priesthood. The high priest is to be "*able*" (DUNAMAI - to be able, possible) to deal "*gently*" (MATRIOPATHEO - gentle, to treat indulgently) with people. They represent the Lord God and should reflect his character. The author names two types of people with whom all high priests should be gentle. The first are the "*ignorant*" (AGNOEO - not to know, to ignore, not understand). These are the ones who have little knowledge concerning spiritual things. The second are those who are "*led astray*" (PLANAO - to lead astray, err). They are the ones who, for whatever reason, have taken the wide road and are no longer walking with the Lord. The author gives us the reason why the high priest should be gentle with people.

v.2 ... since he himself also is surrounded by weakness,

It is easy to understand since he himself is "*surrounded*" (PERIKEIMAI - to lie all around, unclose, encircle, be bound) by "*weakness*" (ASTHENEIA - feebleness of mind or body). He is a sinner and falls into sin. He has a fallen nature and needs to remember that he also fails in his spiritual life. May we also remember that we are not perfect and should not expect others to be.

<sup>3</sup> and because of it he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins *for himself also, as well as for the people.*

This verse proves to us that the human high priest is a sinner like another person. The proof given is that the high priest was "*obligated*" (OPHEILO - to be under obligation, be bound) to offer sacrifices for "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offence) not only for the "*people*" (LAOS - a people) who came to see him but also for "*himself*" (HEAUTOU - him, her, it, them). The high priest was a sinner among sinners who had received the grace to have a ministry of interceding for God's people.

<sup>4</sup> And someone does not take for himself the honor, but is called by God, just as Aaron also *was.*

The author reminds his readers that "*someone*" (TIS - some or any person or object) does NOT "*take*" (LAMBANO - to take, to seize, obtain) for himself the "*honor*" (TIME - a value, esteem, honor) of being a high priest. No man can acquire this privilege of being a high priest by himself. One could not acquire knowledge or buy his way to this priesthood. This was granted only if he were "*called*" (KALEO - to call aloud) by God and the example of Aaron is given.

<sup>5</sup> Thus also Christ did not glorify himself to become high priest, but the one who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you,”

<sup>6</sup> just as also in another *place* he says,

“You *are* a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek,”

The author now turns to Jesus, the celestial high priest, and brings us details of his ministry. The first thing we see is that he also DID NOT "*glorify*" (DOXAZO - to render

esteem, glory, honor) himself as a high priest. He could have, since he was the living God in the flesh. He could have done so since he was the perfect and eternal sacrifice. However, he did not! This should teach us to remain humble in life, whoever we are and whatever we have done. The author points to the one (the Father) who has established Christ as the eternal high priest. This is what the Father said concerning the Son,

v.5 ...“You are my Son, today I have begotten you,”  
    <sup>6</sup>just as also in another *place* he says,  
“You *are* a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek,”

The first declaration of the Father is that: you (Jesus) are my "Son" (HUIOS - a son, immediate or remote, kinship). The Father declares the deity of our celestial high priest. In other words, he is not a man like a child of Adam was. He took on flesh, as Paul describes:

1Tim. 3

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.  
(NKJV)

The author then quotes from Ps. 2:7. This is a solemn declaration to humanity that deity also belongs to the Son. We see this affirmation in Hebrews 1:2,5 as well as John 5:18. Paul also describes the divine "son-hood" of Jesus:

Romans 1

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God  
2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,  
3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh  
4 and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his  
    resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,  
(RSV)

What is to be noted is that it is the Father who exalts the Son as the high priest. The Father had "*begotten*" (GENAO - to procreate, begot) the Son. The word GENAO must be taken metaphorically, which means to cause to arise, or one who brings others over to his side. This is used of true believers who become children of God. God made them to become something else. In our context, we see that the Father "ordained" or caused the Son to become the eternal high priest of his people.

<sup>6</sup>just as also in another *place* he says,  
"You *are* a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek,"

This was the Father's declaration concerning the Son: You are a "*priest*" (HIEREUS - a priest) "*forever*" (AION - an age, eternal, forever). If Jesus is the Father's appointed high priest forever, is there any need for another high priest or priest? The simple answer is "NO" as we will see later on in this epistle. His priesthood is according to the "*order*" (TAXIS - fixed succession of rank or character) of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek appeared in Genesis 14. After Abraham delivered his nephew Lot from bondage Melchizedek came to him as we see in the following verses:

#### Genesis 14

17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.

19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth;

20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"  
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

(RSV)

This is the only place in the Old Testament where Melchizedek is named, except for a phrase in Ps. 110:4 (which the author uses in this section). It is important to understand that Melchizedek was priest of the God Most High BEFORE the priesthood was established by God through Moses.

<sup>7</sup> who in the days of his flesh offered up both prayers and supplications, with loud crying and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard as a result of his reverence.

The author continues to describe Jesus as the high priest of the order of Melchizedek. He describes Jesus in the "*days*" (HEMERA - the time space between dawn and dark) of his "*flesh*" (SARX - flesh, the body as opposed to the soul). In other words, when he was living among us, Jesus "*offered up*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, present unto) both "*prayers*" (DEESIS - a petition, a prayer, request) and "*supplications*" (HIKETERIA - an olive branch, supplication). The idea of an olive branch pictures a person giving an olive branch to another, manifesting that he came as a suppliant (beggar) asking for a favor. The words "prayers and supplications" are often used together and convey the same idea.

v.7 ... with loud crying and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard as a result of his reverence.

Jesus often went in prayer to his Father, but there was a specific time when he did so with "*loud*" (ISCHUROS - forcible, mighty, valiant) "*crying*" (KRAUGE - an outcry, grief, clamor) and "*tears*" (DAKRU - a tear). It may be that the author was referring to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed to his Father to give him strength concerning his coming ordeal. He knew that his Father was able to "*save*" (SOZO - safe, to save, rescue) him from the death of the cross. We know that Jesus prayed on three different occasions, not only to be saved from death but mostly that the Father's will be done (Mat. 26:38-45). Jesus was "*heard*" (EISAKOUO - to listen, to hear) by the Father because of his "*reverence*" (EULABEIA - caution, reverence, dread, fear) towards him.

<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered,

I believe that this verse is connected with the preceding one. Jesus prayed, and he prayed so hard that drops of blood fell from his face (Luke 22:44). The Father did not deliver him from the cross and the unimaginable suffering it would bring. It is written that Jesus, although he was his son, "*learned*" (MANTHANO - to learn, understand) "*obedience*" (HUPAKOE - submission, obedience, obey) from what he "*suffered*"

(PASCHO - to experience pain, suffer). Jesus needed to go to the cross not only to bring salvation to those who would repent of their sins, but also to learn obedience! If we are disciples of Christ, we may find that a life of learning and suffering passes through a life of obedience. We simply cannot grow, as children of God if we do not obey, even if it leads to suffering in one way or another.

<sup>9</sup>and being perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey  
him,

It is through the submission of the cross that Jesus, as our high priest, became "*perfected*" (TELEIOO - accomplish, finish, perfect). He was the "perfect" sacrifice. We will see this in Hebrews 10. Being the perfect sacrifice, Jesus is able to be the "*source*" (AITIOS - causative, a cause, author) of "*eternal*" (AIONIOS - perpetual, eternal, everlasting) "*salvation*" (SOTERIA - rescue, safety, salvation). The only source given to men to receive forgiveness of their sins and the gift of eternal life is Jesus Christ, the celestial high priest. Let no one fool you - there is NO OTHER source of salvation. This source is for ALL who "*obey*" (HUPAKOOUO - to heed, to conform, obey) him. As we have seen, our "*obedience*" is to hear and accept the "Good News" of Jesus Christ.

<sup>10</sup>being designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

This is the final statement concerning Jesus, our high priest, in this section. We first see that he was "*designated*" (PROSAGOREUO - to address, salute by name, to call). Jesus was called by God to become the "*high priest*" (ARCHIEREUS - the high priest, chief priest) according to the "*order*" (TAXIS - fixed succession of rank or character) of Melchizedek. As we have seen, NO ONE else was designated to be an eternal and perfect high priest by the Lord God. All those who profess differently are false teachers.

### *13 - A warning against spiritual immaturity*

Hebrews 5:11-14

<sup>11</sup> Concerning this *we have much to say and it is difficult to explain*, since you have become sluggish in hearing. <sup>12</sup> For indeed, *although you ought to be teachers by this time*, you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God, and *you have need of milk*, not solid food. <sup>13</sup> For everyone who partakes of milk *is unacquainted with the message of righteousness*, because he is an infant. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have trained their faculties for the distinguishing of both good and evil.

(LEB)

What was unfortunate for his readers, and also for us today, is that the writer does not go as deeply as he would have desired, simply because his readers were not able to grasp what he desired them to understand. If they had been more mature in the Lord, we probably would have received more teaching. This goes to show that deliberate ignorance has an impact not only on oneself but also on others!

<sup>11</sup> Concerning this *we have much to say and it is difficult to explain*, since you have become sluggish in hearing.

The "this" is the subject that the writer wrote about in our last section — Jesus and his ministry as our high priest. The writer confesses that there is "*much*" (POLUS - much, many, great) to "*say*" (LOGOS - something said, utterance, communication). But there is a problem, and it is because it is "*difficult*" (DUSERMENEUTOS - hard to be uttered) to explain. From this, we can see that the author has only scratched the surface on the topic of Jesus being our high priest. But the real problem IS NOT that the subject is difficult to understand but rather that his readers have "*become*" (GINOMAI - to cause to be, to become) "*sluggish*" (NOTHROS - sluggish, lazy, stupid, dull) in "*hearing*" (OKOE - the act of hearing). They were unable to receive the teaching that he would have desired to give them. It may be compared to teaching trigonometry to a six year old. He would not understand anything. It's understandable for a six-year-old, but not for these

Christians, as we'll see. This is a warning for all of us. Being intellectually dull IS NEVER good for our spiritual life.

<sup>12</sup>For indeed, *although you ought to be teachers by this time*, you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God, and *you have need of milk*, not solid food.

How do believers grow in their spiritual life? Is it by others constantly encouraging them to think about their good points? Is telling someone over and over again that they excel in this or in that what will make that person mature in Christ? Any teacher will say "NO". That is not how you help someone grow in knowledge and wisdom. What needs to be done is to challenge the student and push him to the next level of discernment; - this is what our writer is doing in this section. He tells his readers that something is wrong and points to what it is. He writes that "*you ought*" (OPHEILO - to be under obligation, to owe). They were supposed to be "*teachers*" (DIDASKALOS - an instructor, a teacher) by this "*time*" (CHRONOS - a space of time). Time had come for them to be full of knowledge and able to transmit that knowledge to the next generation of believers. But it seems that they wasted their time on other things. Imagine a child who grows up and when he celebrates his twentieth birthday still acts and thinks as though he were an eight year old. Wouldn't that be shameful? In a way, this is how the readers of this epistle were, very immature for their "spiritual age."

v.12 ... you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God, and *you have need of milk*, not solid food.

The writer explains their fundamental problem. You have "*need*" (CHEIA - necessary, need, want) of someone to "*teach*" (DIASKO - teach, to learn) you again the "*beginning*" (ARCHE - a commencement, chief) "*elements*" (STOICHEION - something orderly in arrangement) of the "*oracles*" (LOGION - an utterance of God). It seems that they were still at the basic levels of "Theology 101". As babes, they needed "*milk*" (GALA - milk) and not "*solid food*" (STEREOS TROPHE - strong meat). Nowhere is it mentioned that they never had any teachers to explain things to them, nor that they were unfortunately incapable of understanding the deeper thoughts of the Lord God. It seems that they NEGLECTED to study and DESIRED to remain immature concerning spiritual things. Have you been slack in growing in the Lord? Are you still growing and

becoming more spiritually mature? May we never cease to desire to know the Almighty in a deeper and personal sense.

<sup>13</sup> For everyone who partakes of milk *is* unacquainted with the message of righteousness, because he is an infant.

The author is certainly not flattering his readers concerning their spiritual immaturity! For "*everyone*", there are no exceptions to this rule. Who "*partakes*" (METECHO - eat, drink, be a partaker, use) of milk (very light spiritual understanding) is "*unacquainted*" (APEIROS - inexperienced, ignorant) with the "*message*" (LOGOS - something said, preaching, speech) of "*righteousness*" (DIKAIOSUNE - equity of character or act). His readers were very limited in their understanding of God's righteousness. The foundation of the gospel is the righteousness of Christ, which is transferred to the repentant believer! If you do not understand this correctly, your entire spiritual foundation is like sinking sand. Remember what Christ said:

#### Matthew 7

24 Everyone, then, to whom my words come and who does them, will be like a wise man who made his house on a rock;

25 And the rain came down and there was a rush of waters and the winds were driving against that house, but it was not moved; because it was based on the rock.

26 And everyone to whom my words come and who does them not, will be like a foolish man who made his house on sand;

27 And the rain came down and there was a rush of waters and the winds were driving against that house; and it came down and great was its fall.

(BBE)

Why is the believer unable to deeply understand the righteousness of God? The answer given is that he is an "*infant*" (NEPIAZO - to act as a babe). They were immature in their faith. I believe that it was their choice since the author is not pleased with their spiritual state. It is simply not natural for a disciple of Christ to remain in his childish ways instead of being mature. Paul wrote about growing up in the Lord:

#### 1 Corinthians 13

11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;  
when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

(RSV)

It is unfortunate to see that these believers did not give up their spiritual childish ways.

<sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have trained their faculties  
for the distinguishing of both good and evil.

In this verse, the author describes where they should stand spiritually. He begins by speaking of the "*solid*" (STEREOS - stiff, solid, stable) "*food*" (TROPHE - nourishment, rations, food, meat). This is what they should be "eating", solid spiritual food instead of "drinking" spiritual milk. Could you imagine what it would look like to see a grown person take his/her baby bottle out during their lunch break? This solid food is for the "*mature*" (TELEIOS - complete, full of age, perfect) in the Lord.

Now, how can you tell if you are mature in the Lord? The first clue is that they "*practice*" (HEXIS - habit, practice, use) what they have already learned. It is not only spiritual information that they have received, but information that they immediately put into practice in their lives. People who do not practice what they preach are not spiritually mature. Second thought is that they have "*trained*" (GUMNAZO - to practice naked, train, exercise) their "*faculties*" (AISTHETERION - judgment, senses, perception). This gives me the idea that a mature person takes time to think and reason. He evaluates the situations that are before him, analyses the facts, and places them before the Word of God. He reflects and considers all aspects BEFORE making a decision. He takes the time needed before he comes to a conclusion. A mature Christian can process and evaluate situations and theological issues; he is not rash in his thinking.

Finally, the mature Christian is able to "*distinguish*" (DIAKRISIS - judicial estimation, discern) both what is "*good*" (KALOS - good, virtuous, honest) and what is "*evil*" (KAKOS - worthless, depraved, evil, wicked). Because his mind is trained to be able to analyze and think spiritually, a mature person can instantly have a sense of good or evil standing before him. He knows what is pleasant to the Lord and what he detests. This should be the prayer of every true believer:

Ps. 119

135 Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes.

(NKJV)

The warning against spiritual immaturity should be heard today—more than ever! The lack of basic knowledge, let alone the deeper thoughts of God, is rampant in our churches. The Gospel is watered down to "Jesus loves you". Taking the time and effort needed to grow spiritually is no longer virtuous. Our time is spent on things that will perish or oppose our growth in Christ. The world offers everything on a golden platter, but it comes at a great price. The price is remaining as a "babe" in Christ and almost being useless for the Kingdom of God.

## 14 - *The peril of not progressing*

Hebrews 6:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, leaving behind the elementary message about Christ, let us move on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, <sup>2</sup>teaching about baptisms and laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup>And this we will do, if God permits. <sup>4</sup>For *it is impossible concerning* those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and become sharers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age, <sup>6</sup>and having fallen away, to renew *them* again to repentance, *because they* have crucified again for themselves the Son of God and held him up to contempt. <sup>7</sup>For ground that drinks the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth vegetation usable to those *people for whose sake it is* also cultivated, shares a blessing from God. <sup>8</sup>But *if it* produces thorns and thistles, *it is* worthless and near to a curse, whose end *is* for burning.

(LEB)

In our last section, we spoke about the dangers of remaining immature in our faith and knowledge of the Lord God. The Almighty expects his spiritual children to grow and become mature. In our present section, the author gives a stern warning against the perils of not progressing. Could this be a sign that one is not saved at all?

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, leaving behind the elementary message about Christ, let us move on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, <sup>2</sup>teaching about baptisms and laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

As usual, our section once more begins with the word "*therefore*" (DIO - through which thing, consequently). The author spoke of spiritual immaturity, and we see that he desired to go forward in spiritual matters. He writes "*leaving behind*" (APHIEMI - to lay aside, leave, let go). There are things that he does not want to write about, for they are the "*elementary*" (ARCHE - a commencement, beginning, principle) message about Christ. There are things that they should all know and have recognized as true. Things

that they had been taught by teachers, prophets, elders, and the sort. This is what the author called "milk" in our last section. These are the basic things about "*Christ*" (CHRISTOS - anointed, Messiah). He desires to bring his readers to a deeper insight concerning spiritual matters. That should be the desire of every spiritual leader. Jesus said the following:

Mat. 28

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
(NKJV)

This is THE mandate—to make disciples. All else is not comparable. If we make the disciples strong and steady, anchored in their faith, then the church will be much healthier.

v.1 ... let us move on to maturity,

This is the goal that the author sets before his readers. No childish talk about things you already know (the milk), but digging deeper into the thoughts of God (the meat). Let us "*move on*" (PHERO - bearing, carry, driven, go on) to "*maturity*" (TELEIOTES - completeness, perfection, be more intelligent). As we will see, there are grave dangers in not growing in the Lord, for it may be a sign that we are not saved at all!

The author will give six examples of subjects that he DOES NOT want to take time to write about. He believes that they already ought to know about them. He does not want to be "*laying*" (KATABALLO - to throw down, to lay down) again a "*foundation*" (THEMELIOS - something put down, a foundation). Here are the six subjects that the author will skip over. The first is:

v.1 ... repentance from dead works

He does not want to talk about "*repentance*" (MATANIOA - reversal, repentance, a change of mind) from "*dead*" (NEKROS - a corpse, dead) "*works*" (ERGON - to work, toil, labor). The apostle Paul would call these the words of the flesh that people do to obtain righteousness before the Lord God. They believe that following the Law will

enable them to become righteous. We know that this is never the case, for the Law only brings condemnation and never justification.

#### Romans 10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

2 I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened.

3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

4 For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.

(RSV)

The second foundation is,

#### v.1 ... faith in God

True faith in God is not an intellectual faith, which is knowing about God like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the teachers of the Law did. Because Jesus says the devil is their father (John 8:43,44). Faith is not even what comes out of an encounter with the presence of God, for the demons surely know God, but James assures us that they tremble (James 2:19). What the author is writing about is SAVING faith. It is like the faith of the blind man who was given back his sight, and when he stood before Jesus and realized he was the one who cured him, he worshipped him (John 9:35-39). Saving faith is when Martha confesses that Jesus is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-27). Saving faith is the faith that Peter had when he declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mat. 11:11). True faith is also what will be discussed in Hebrews 11.

The third foundation is,

#### v.2 teaching about baptisms...

There are two baptisms that the Bible teaches about. The first is water baptism, which is what every true believer should pass through as soon as possible after he/she comes to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said to baptize believers and make disciples out of them (Mat. 28:19). The second baptism is that of the Holy Spirit. This promise was

given by the Father to his new spiritual children and was granted on the day of Pentecost, when ALL of the disciples in the upper room were filled with the Holy Spirit. This IS NOT something that we do, as with water baptism, but rather something that the Lord God does. It is his gift to his children when they believed (Acts 19:1-6). The Holy Spirit is a seal that they belong to God for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

The fourth is about the,

#### v.2 ... laying on of hands

We know that the apostles laid their hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit, but this ended when the three groups of people (Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles) who represented their ethnicity received the Holy Spirit. After that, the Holy Spirit came "automatically" when one believed (Acts 19:2). The other laying of the hands seems to have to do with giving approval to certain people in the churches. We see that the apostle Paul tells Timothy not to be hasty and lay his hands on people too fast (1 Tim. 5:22). The apostles laid their hands on people with certain ministries (Acts 6:6). In some cases, a spiritual gift was given through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14).

The fifth is the following,

#### v.2 ... resurrection of the dead

The author probably refers to the resurrection that is promised to all who believe in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:42; Heb. 11:35; 1 Peter 1:3; Rev. 20:6).

The sixth is,

#### v.2 ... eternal judgment

This refers to the final judgment. All will have to appear before the great throne of God. There will be a separation between those who believed and those who did not. Jesus speaks of this in Mat. 25:31-46. This judgment is eternal and is called "the second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6; 21:8). This is how the Bible describes the second death:

Revelation 20

14 And death and Hell were put into the sea of fire. This is the second death, even the sea of fire.

15 And if anyone's name was not in the book of life, he went down into the sea of fire.  
(BBE)

Once the author has determined what NOT to teach about, he writes the following.

<sup>3</sup>And this we will do, if God permits.

This is what he desires to do only if "God" (THEOS- the true God, creator and sustainer) "*permits*" (EPITROPE - permission, full power). The author does what every true believer should do, and that is to place all of our projects in the hands of the Lord for his approval. This is what Paul did when he hoped to go to Jerusalem and come back to see the Brethren in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21). James also speaks about placing our future in the hands of God in James 4:13-15.

<sup>4</sup>For *it is impossible concerning* those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and become sharers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age,

We have come upon, in my humble view, one of the most difficult sections not only in the book of Hebrews but in the New Testament (except for Revelations). If we are not careful in our understanding of verses four to eight, we will err and come to a tragic theological conclusion, which so many have fallen into - the loss of salvation. Also remember that I wrote that we must ALWAYS see the difference between THOSE (who are not true believers) and US (the true believers).

The author speaks of something that is "*impossible*" (ADUNATOS - unable, impossible, impotent, not able to do). This is the only time that this Greek word is used in this epistle. There is something that simply can not occur when something is given and it is NOT RECEIVED with faith. One must remember that the author is writing to people (Jews) who have received so much from God and yet (as they did in the desert with Moses and Aaron) the majority did not please the Lord God because of the hardness of their hearts. Here are the five things which the author brings to mind which his

contemporary fellow-Jews had received from God but, to some, had no avail in their eternal situation.

The first is,

v.4 ... who have once been enlightened

This concerns people who have been "*enlightened*" (PHOTIZO - to shed rays, to shine on, light, to bring to light, to give light). The Hebrew nation had received the light of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Spiritual truth has been given by the prophets and patriarchs of old. Not only were they enlightened, but they were called to be a light unto the Gentiles.

Isaiah 42

6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles,  
(NKJV)

The second is,

v.4 ... and have tasted the heavenly gift

The Jewish nation had also "*tasted*" (GEUOMAI - to taste, to eat, to feel, to experience) the "*heavenly*" (EPOURANIOS - above the sky, celestial, things existing in heaven) "*gift*" (DOREA - a gratuity, a gift). Had the Jewish nation not tasted the heavenly gifts from the Lord God? Whether it be the morning manna in the desert or victories over their enemies, God's people had experienced, in so many ways, the presence of the Lord.

The third is,

v.4 ... and become sharers of the Holy Spirit

The Hebrew people were also "*sharers*" (METOCHOS - participant, a sharer) of the Holy Spirit. From Bezalel for the building of the Tabernacle (Ex. 31:1-3), Balaam the prophet (Num. 24:2), King Saul (1 Sam. 11:6) the prophets Ezekiel (Ez. 11:24) Daniel (Dan. 5:14)

and so many others in the Old Testament. Old Simeon (Luke 2:25) and Anna, who was a prophetess (Luke 2:36-38) also shared in the Holy Spirit. For some, like Saul and Balaam, it had no long term effect on them, while for others, because of their faith, they continued to share in the Spirit until they passed away.

The fourth is,

<sup>5</sup>and have tasted the good word of God

Once more, the word "*tasted*" (GEUOMAI - to taste, to eat, to feel, to experience) is used. This time it is in reference to the "*good*" (KALOS - beautiful, good, valuable) word of God. From the Ten Commandments, to the Law and the Prophets. God's people had been given the great privilege of being the "keepers" of the words of God. Again, to some, this had a permanent effect, while for others, it lasted but for a short while, for their hearts were hardened towards their Lord.

The fifth is,

v.5 ... and the powers of the coming age

The "*powers*" (DUNAMIS - force, miraculous powers, might) of the "*coming*" (MELLO - to intend, to be about to be) "*age*" (AION - an age, perpetuity of time). This concerned the promise of the coming Messiah and his reign. An example of this is Isaiah 2:2. The Bible also spoke of the coming of the branch of the Lord (Isaiah 4:2; Jer. 23:5, 33:15). The Hebrew people knew that they would participate in this coming kingdom and would rule as God's chosen people.

Then the tone changes and the author brings us to his conclusion about these people who had received so much. They had tasted, seen, heard, and experienced the powerful hand of God. They had received the priesthood and were the keepers of the Sacred Words. But again, to most of them, ALL OF THIS brought no permanent change in their love and relationship with God because their hearts had become callous. They placed their trust in the law and not the lawmaker. Some people didn't believe it at all!

<sup>6</sup>and having fallen away, to renew *them* again to repentance, *because they* have crucified again for themselves the Son of God and held him up to contempt.

So we have a group of people (the Jews) who have received the five things mentioned above, and for the greater part, they have "*fallen away*" (PARAPIPTO - to fall aside, apostatize, to deviate). What they received was holy, but they turned away from what was holy to what they wanted. A perfect picture of this is when Moses was on the mountaintop receiving the Ten Commandments. After 40 days, the people no longer waited for his return and they made a "golden calf" to represent their God (Ex. 32:1-5). They had partaken in the Lord, and yet they turned their backs on him and worshipped the work of their hands. They had "*fallen away*," as the writer explains. So what is impossible for those who neglected and even despised what the Lord had done for them?

v.6 ... to renew *them* again to repentance, *because they* have crucified again for themselves the Son of God and held him up to contempt.

Once they have tasted how good the Lord is and hardened their hearts unto him, it is impossible for them to "*renew*" (ANAKAINIZO - to restore, to renew) again to "*repentance*" (METANOIA - a reversal of one's decision). It seems that here is a point of "no return". One rebels so much and blasphemes so much that the door is no longer open, the door of their hearts that is. A stern warning has already been given in Hebrews 3:7,8,13-15; 4:7 about hardening your hearts. One may have a hardened heart until it is too late. One can have knowledge and even experience the goodness of God and yet have no part in him. Remember what Jesus said:

#### Matthew 7

21 "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'

(RSV)

The author gives his reason why they can not come to repentance,

v.6 ...*because they* have crucified again for themselves the Son of God and held him up to contempt.

To his contemporary Jewish brothers and sisters, the author declares that those who have received so much yet refuse the Messiah they can not come to "*repentance*" (METANOIA - a reversal of one's decision) because they have "*crucified*" (ANASTAUROO - re-crucify, crucify afresh) again for "*themselves*" (HEAUTOU - himself, herself) the Son of God (the Messiah) and held him up "*to contempt*" (PARADEIGMATIZO - to expose to infamy, make a public example).

A perfect example of this was the Jewish people who cried out "crucify him" (Mark 15:13) wanting his death and rejecting their Messiah. Once he was on the cross, they taunted him, saying to come down from the cross (Mark 15:30). They even dared him, saying that if he were the king of the Jews, surely he could come down from the cross (Mark 15:32). People can harden their hearts to a point where they bring into contempt the Son of God. This also reminds me of what Paul taught in Romans chapters 1 and 2 concerning the wrath of God towards people he had so openly manifested himself to.

The author ends this section with an example we can all understand.

<sup>7</sup>For ground that drinks the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth vegetation usable to those *people for whose sake it is* also cultivated, shares a blessing from God. <sup>8</sup>But *if it*<sup>[c]</sup> produces thorns and thistles, *it is* worthless and near to a curse, whose end *is* for burning.

He speaks of the "*ground*" (GE - soil, earth, land) that "*drinks*" (PINO - to imbibe, drink) the rain that comes "*often*" (POLLAKIS - many times, often). He is giving the image of God who, in his grace, makes the rain fall on the ground. There are two things that can happen. The first is that it "*brings forth*" (TIKTO - to produce, bear, bring forth) "*vegetation*" (BOTANE - herbage). In other words it bear fruits and vegetables for the people for whose sake it is also "*cultivated*" (GEORGEIO - to till the soil). This becomes a "*blessing*" (EULOGIA - benediction, a blessing) from God.

<sup>8</sup> But *if it* produces thorns and thistles, *it is* worthless and near to a curse, whose end *is* for burning.

The second thing that water can do when it falls on the ground is that if the ground is not made of good soil, it will "*produce*" (EKPHERO - to bear out, carry forth) "*thorns*" (AKANTHA - a thorn) and "*thistles*" (TRIBOLOS - a thorny plant, thistles). This IS NOT GOOD for human consumption, so it is "*worthless*" (ADOKIMOS - unapproved, worthless, rejected). Because it is worthless, it is only good for "*burning*" (KAUSIS - to set on fire, fervent heat).

The word of God falls upon all of humanity. In some instances, it falls on good ground and produces good fruit, but on other grounds it produces worthless thorns and thistles. Does that remind you of a parable Jesus once taught?

#### Matthew 13

3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow.

4 "And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

5 "Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

6 "But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

7 "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

8 "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

(NKJV)

I hope your heart is of good soil and that you bear good fruit.

## 15 - *Better things in Christ*

Hebrews 6:9-12

<sup>9</sup> But even if we are speaking in this way, dear friends, we are convinced of better *things* concerning you, and belonging to salvation. <sup>10</sup> For God *is* not unjust, so *as* to forget your work and the love which you demonstrated for his name by having served the saints, and continuing to serve *them*. <sup>11</sup> And we desire each one of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of *your* hope until the end, <sup>12</sup> in order that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and patience.

(LEB)

This section is closely linked with the preceding one. In fact, one can say that it is the continuation of what was written in Heb. 6:1-8. This section will provide an important answer to a question that one might have asked while reading the last section: Can a true believer lose his salvation if he falls on his way?

<sup>9</sup> But even if we are speaking in this way, dear friends, we are convinced of better *things* concerning you, and belonging to salvation.

The first phrase (if we are speaking this way) deals with what has been said in our last section concerning the impossibility of repenting again. In other words, is there a point where a TRUE believer can come to a point where repentance and forgiveness are impossible? Please note that in this section the writer calls his readers "*dear friends*" (AGAPETOS - beloved, well loved, dear). In our last section, he called his readers "*concerning those*" in Heb. 6:4. What a difference between those people and our dear friends. This is what, I believe, splits his readers into two groups. On one hand, there are those who have hardened their hearts towards God even though he has manifested himself to them. On the other hand, are the ones who have received Christ as their Lord and Savior and have become beloved of God.

The author writes that we are "*convinced*" (PEITHO - to convince, to assent, to agree) of two things concerning the ones that are beloved of God. The first is of "*better*"

(KATHAPER - exactly as, as well as) things concerning you. This refers to the awful judgment those who have rejected the Messiah are going to receive since they have not repented. Such a judgment is not for the second group. They are rather for "*better things*". There is a wonderful hope for those who are in Christ Jesus!

The second thing that the author is convinced is about belonging to "*salvation*" (SOTERIA - rescue, safety, deliver, salvation). There is NO judgment for these beloved of God, but salvation of their souls awaits them. This totally destroys the thought that if you are a TRUE BELIEVER and fall into sin, there is NO repentance available for you! Later on in his letter, the author will profusely write about the perfect and eternal salvation that resides in Christ. Please remember what John wrote concerning when believers fall into sin.

1 John 1

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.  
(NKJV)

In our next verse we will see that the Lord God is faithful unto his children.

<sup>10</sup> For God *is* not unjust, *so as* to forget your work and the love which you demonstrated for his name by having served the saints, and continuing to serve *them*.

Believers may sometimes become unfaithful and fall into sin. We may be saved from the judgment to come, but our flesh and its desires fight every day against what is holy. The apostle Paul knew this, and he called himself the greatest of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

Amen that God is not "*unjust*" (ADIKOS - unjust, unrighteous). He is not unjust because he will not "*forget*" (EPILANTHANOMAI - to lose out of mind, forgetful) two things. The first is your "*work*" (ERGON - to work, toil, labor) in his name. This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

(RSV)

Yes, all of our work for the Lord is not in vain, for he will not forget what we do for him and his glory. The second thing he will not forget is the following:

v. 10 ... the love which you demonstrated for his name by having served the saints, and continuing to serve *them*.

God will not forget the "*love*" (AGAPE - affection, benevolence, love) which you have "*demonstrated*" (ENDEIKNUMI - to indicate, show forth, display, manifest). I would like to stress this point. It is the love that believers demonstrate that will be rewarded, NOT the love for others that is latent in our minds or hearts! If I see someone in need and do not respond by actually helping out, then there will be no rewards because I have done nothing. Our love needs to be demonstrated to become "real love". It is not the love that I have demonstrated that will be remembered but the love that I have demonstrated for "*his name*" (ONAMA - a name, surname). If I love others, there is nothing special about that. Even sinners do it as Jesus teaches:

Matthew 5

46 For if you have love for those who have love for you, what credit is it to you? do not the tax-farmers the same?

47 And if you say, Good day, to your brothers only, what do you do more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?

(BBE)

Anyone can be kind and loving! God will remember the love we have for others when it is done "*for his name*". One needs to give glory to God when they are active in their Christian life and let people know that it is because of him that we are caring for them.

v.10 ... by having served the saints, and continuing to serve *them*.

This is how the believers loved their brothers and sisters. They "*served*" (DIAKONEO - an attendant, to wait upon, serve) the saints, their fellow brothers and sisters. Not only that, but they are continuing to do so. Their service was not a "once in a while" thing that they did. It was continuous, it had become a way of life. Their hearts had been transformed, and the love of God had been poured into their hearts (Rom. 5:5). May all believers manifest their love as these disciples did!

<sup>11</sup> And we desire each one of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of *your* hope until the end,

This is what the writer "*desires*" (EPITHUMEO - to set the heart upon, long for) for his readers. He writes "*for each one of you*" (HEKASTOS - each or every). There was no exception. What he is about to say is for everyone to apply in their lives. This was to "*demonstrate*" (ENDEIKNUMI - to indicate, do, show forth) the same "*diligence*" (SPOUDE - speed, eagerness, haste) for the "*full assurance*" (PLEROPHORIA - entire confidence) of your "*hope*" (ELPIS - expectation, confidence, hope). The hope of every true believer is the return of their Lord and Savior. It is the coming of the Kingdom of God, where he will reign as sovereign over all people. The author desires that his readers will keep on manifesting their hope in life UNTIL the "*end*" (TELOS - the point aimed at, the conclusion of an act). Continue in the faith is what he is saying. Don't stop loving the Lord and those around you.

<sup>12</sup> in order that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and patience.

The author tells his readers to persevere in the faith, be active and serve each other in love as you wait for your hope to come. What he does not want his readers to do is the following:

v.12 ... that you may not be sluggish

He does not want them to be "*sluggish*" (NOTHROS - sluggish, lazy, dull). This reminds me of the parable of the talents and what Jesus said to the servant who was sluggish:

Matthew 25

24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

(NKJV)

If true believers are not to be sluggish in their lives what should they do?

v.12 ... but imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and patience.

They should be "*imitators*" (MIMETES - an imitator, a follower) of those who "*inherit*" (KLERONOMEIO - to be an heir to) the "*promises*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, a promise). The promises are the ones that the Lord God has given to his children in Christ Jesus. It is with our faith and patience that we inherit the promises of God, and it is ALSO with our faith and patience that we imitate those who in the past have lived godly lives.

## 16 - *The immutability of God's promises*

Hebrews 6:13-20

<sup>13</sup> For *when* God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying,

*“Surely I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply you.”*

<sup>15</sup> And so, *by* persevering, he obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For people swear by what is greater *than themselves*, and the oath for confirmation *is the* end of all dispute for them. <sup>17</sup> In the same way God, *because he* wanted to show even more to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his resolve, guaranteed *it* with an oath, <sup>18</sup> in order that through two unchangeable things, in which *it is* impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge may have powerful encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before *us*, <sup>19</sup> which we have like an anchor of the soul, both firm and steadfast, and entering into the inside of the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus, the forerunner for us, entered, *because he* became a high priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek.

(LEB)

In our last section, the author spoke of the hope and the better things that await all who have repented of their sins and called upon the name of Jesus to be saved from the coming judgment. In this section, we will see on what foundation the believer's hope and better things to come are built upon.

<sup>13</sup> For *when* God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself,

The foundation of our hope goes back to our father in the faith, which is Abraham (Rom. 4:1) and the promise given to him by the Almighty. In his relationship with Abraham, "God" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer) made a "*promise*" (EPAGGELLO - to announce, to assert, a promise). We begin to understand that the foundation of the promise made to Abraham is the Lord God himself. Is there any

greater foundation than the Lord? Because of this, Abraham and all of his spiritual descendants can rest assured. No one is "*greater*" (MEIZON - larger, greater, more) than God, so God "*swore*" (OMNUO - to swear, take an oath) by "*himself*" (HEAUTOU - him, her, himself, herself, it). There was no higher name under which he could make an oath than his own, so that is what God did. Just this is sufficient for the believer to trust that the promises of God will come true because, as we will see, God does not lie.

<sup>14</sup>saying,

*"Surely I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply you."*

This is the promise that God gave to Abraham. It begins with "*surely*" (E - assuredly, surely, most certainly). The promise was DEFINITIVE; nothing could or would change the Lord's mind. The promise is this: "I will greatly bless you." In the original Greek it reads this way: "blessing I will bless". The word "*blessing*" means (EULOGEO - to speak well of, to bless). In a way, this is a DOUBLE blessing because God says that he will bless the blessing. Surely, there is no greater way of desiring to prove that his promise is a solid foundation that Abraham could place his faith in. If you are a spiritual descendant of Abraham, this promise is also for you, as we will see.

v.14 ... and *I will greatly multiply you.*

This is the second promise. The Lord God will greatly multiply you. In the Greek it is read this way: "multiplying I will multiply." Once again, this is a DOUBLE promise that God gives to Abraham. Twice he declares that he will "*multiply*" (PLETHUNO - to increase, abound, multiply) Abraham. God is speaking about his descendants. This is the promise God made to Abraham:

Gen. 15

3 And Abram said, "Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir."

4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir."

5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

(RSV)

God repeated his promise later on in Abraham's life.

Genesis 22

17 I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies,

18 and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

(RSV)

The holy script now shifts from God to Abraham who had received the promise.

<sup>15</sup> And so, *by persevering*, he obtained the promise.

The author speaks of Abraham and what he did. After hearing God give him his solemn oath, Abraham continued on by "*persevering*" (MAKROTHUMEO - forbearing, patient, longanimity). He did what every one of his spiritual descendants should do—persevere in the faith. Please note that it is THROUGH his perseverance that he "*obtained*" (EPITUGCHANO - to chance upon, to attain, obtain) the promise.

There are many promises that the Lord gives to his children. We are no different than Abraham in the sense that we also must place our trust in what God says and persevere in the faith. Have you ever thought that there could have been many spiritual blessings that you have not received simply because you DID NOT persevere? May we all be like Abraham in our daily walk with our Lord and Savior.

<sup>16</sup> For people swear by what is greater *than themselves*, and the oath for confirmation is *the end of all dispute* for them.

After writing a "quick note" concerning Abraham, the author focuses once again on God. The author begins to explain why God swore upon his name. He first speaks of normal people. They "*swear*" (OMNUO - to swear, to take an oath) by what is "*greater*" (MEIZON - larger, greater, more) than themselves. This reminds me of the Jews in the days of Christ and how they would swear by the gold of the temple or by the gift on the

alter (Mat. 23:16-21) because that was greater than themselves. When one swears by something greater than themselves, this would bring an "end" (PERAS - an extremity, end, utter most) of the "dispute" (ANTILOGIA - dispute, contradiction) between people. One would take for granted that if you made an oath using something greater than you (as the temple of God, for example), that it MUST be true.

<sup>17</sup>In the same way God, *because he* wanted to show even more to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his resolve, guaranteed *it* with an oath,

This example of human behavior is given for the readers to better understand the heart of God. God wanted to "show" (EPIDEIKNUMI - to exhibit, to show) to the "heirs" (KLERONOMOS - a sharer by lot, inheritor) of Abraham "even more" (PERISSOTERON - more abundantly, far more) something. What he desired to show was the "unchangeableness" (AMETATHETOS - unchangeable, immutable, fixed, unalterable) of his "resolve" (BOULE - volition, advice, counsel, will). His resolve was in the two promises that he gave Abraham. God wanted Abraham's heirs to know that this promise was "guaranteed" (MESITEUO - to ratify, confirm) by his own word of promise.

<sup>18</sup>in order that through two unchangeable things, in which *it is* impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge may have powerful encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before *us*,

What are these two "unchangeable" (AMETATHETOS - unchangeable, immutable) things? The first is the promise that God will bless Abraham, and the second is that he will multiply him. The author writes that it is "impossible" (ASUNATOS - unable to be done, impossible) for God to "lie" (PSEUDOMAI - to utter an untruth, to deceive by falsehood, lie).

#### 1 Samuel 15

29 And further, the Glory of Israel will not say what is false, and his purpose may not be changed: for he is not a man, whose purpose may be changed.

(BBE)

If God would lie, then he would be no better than Satan, for Satan is the father of all lies (John 8:44). He does not lie and we can place our entire confidence in him - Amen!

v.18 ... we who have taken refuge may have powerful encouragement to hold fast to  
the hope set before us,

This is why the author teaches that God does not lie. It is for those who have "*taken refuge*" (KATAPHEUGO - to flee away) in God who may have a "*powerful*" (ISCHUROS - forcible, mighty, powerful) "*encouragement*" (PARAKLESIS - solace, comfort, consolation) in him. Because we have received God's promises through Abraham, we are able to "*hold fast*" (KRATEO - to use strength, seize, retain) to the "*hope*" (ELPIS - to anticipate usually with pleasure) that is set before us. God does not want his spiritual children to worry about their future - he will keep his promises even more so (if it is possible to say so) that now we have been washed by the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

<sup>19</sup> which we have like an anchor of the soul, both firm and steadfast,...

The author is giving his readers another example that is easy to imagine. The hope that we have in the promises of God is like an "*anchor*" (AGKURA - an anchor) for a boat. The anchor stops the boat from drifting away and keeps it safe and sound. So are the promises of God, which anchor our "*soul*" (PSUCHE - breath, spirit, soul) unto God. This anchor is both "*firm*" (ASPHALES - secure, certain, safe) and "*steadfast*" (BEBAIOS - stable, firm, sure). It brings security and peace to our soul.

v.19 ... and entering into the inside of the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus, the forerunner for us, entered, *because he* became a high priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek.

Only the high priest could enter inside the "*curtain*" (KATAPETASMA-something spread thoroughly, a veil) and only once a year. But now there is a new high priest, a perfect and eternal high priest, Jesus, that comes into account. He is our "*forerunner*" (PRODROMOS - a runner ahead, a scout) which means that he entered before us. And not only before us, but for us. Jesus "*entered*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in) the curtain which separated the holy and the holy of holies. He was able to do this because he became a "*high priest*" (ARCHIEREUS - the high priest, chief priest). Contrary to all the high priests before him, he became a high priest "*forever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, eternal) because he was the Messiah, the Son of God, and his sacrifice for

all who would believe was perfect and eternal. He was the high priest not to the order of Aaron but to the order of "*Melchizedek*" (MELCHISEDEK - a patriarch, the king of righteousness).

Our anchor is solidly "hooked" on Jesus Christ. Our hope is also solidly grounded on the promises of God. Our lives are secure for all God's children are in his hands and in the hands of their Messiah.

John 10

27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

(NKJV)

## 17 - *The prominence of Melchizedek*

Hebrews 7:1-10

<sup>1</sup>For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham *as he* was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, <sup>2</sup>to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything—in the first place, *his name* is translated “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace”; <sup>3</sup>without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God—he remains a priest for all time. <sup>4</sup>But see how great this man *was*, to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth from the spoils! <sup>5</sup>And indeed those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to collect a tenth from the people according to the law, that is, from their brothers, although *they are descended from Abraham*. <sup>6</sup>But the one who did not trace *his* descent from them collected tithes from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. <sup>7</sup>Now without any dispute the inferior is blessed by the more prominent. <sup>8</sup>And in this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case it is testified that he lives. <sup>9</sup>And, *so to speak*, even Levi, the one who receives tithes, has paid tithes through Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.  
(LEB)

In the first three verses of this section, the author gives his readers an abundance of information concerning the very mysterious person called Melchizedek. Let's look at them and try to see the similarities between Melchizedek and the Lord Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham *as he* was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

In our first verse, we find four facts concerning Melchizedek. The first is that he is "*king of Salem*" (BASILEUS SALEM - sovereign (or king) of peace). This is a unique title and is only used once in the Bible apart from our present section, and that is in Gen. 14:18. No man can be called the King of Peace since no man is able to bring true and everlasting peace to mankind. What we do see is that Jesus Christ is called "Prince of

Peace" in Isaiah 9:6. We see by this that Melchizedek is divine since only God the Son (Isaiah 9:6) and God the Father (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 13:20) have this title.

The second fact is that he is called "*priest*" (HIEREUS - a priest) *of the "most high"* (HUPSISTOS - highest, supreme, most high) "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer). A priest is the one who brings a sacrifice to God for the atonement of sins. We know that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice on the cross (Rom. 3:21-25) for the benefit of all who would believe. He is the ONLY person under the new covenant who is called a priest (HIEREUS).

A third fact is that Melchizedek "*met*" (SUNONTAO - to meet with) Abraham, who was the father of the Hebrew nation. This happened when Abraham came back from winning the war against those who had taken Lot captive (Gen. 14). Apart from Gen. 14 and a single verse in Ps. 110:4, Melchizedek is nowhere to be found and never again mentioned! Only Abraham has ever met him, which is significant because he is the spiritual father of our faith (Rom. 4:12,16; Gal. 3:6-9).

A fourth fact is that Melchizedek "*blessed*" (EULOGEO - to speak well of, to bless) Abraham. We see this in Gen. 14:17-19. As we will see, it is the greater that blesses the lesser, which means that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. Melchizedek is no mere human.

<sup>2</sup>to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything—in the first place, *his name* is translated “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace”;

In verse two, we continue to discover other facts concerning Melchizedek. First, we see that he received "*a tenth of everything*". This is the first time in the Bible that a person gives a "*tenth*" to anyone (Gen. 14:20). This is the beginning of the principle of tithing. Abraham did not have to give Melchizedek a tenth of his war booty, UNLESS he saw Melchizedek as a divinity. The priesthood unto God did not even exist yet, for it would come only under Aaron. By giving a "*tenth*," we see that Abraham gives homage to Melchizedek.

The second fact is the following:

v.2 ... *his name* is translated “king of righteousness, Melchizedek is now revealed as being the "*king*" (BASILEUS - a sovereign, a king) of "*righteousness*" (DIKAIOSUNE - equity of character, righteousness). This relates to his righteousness. It seems that Melchizedek is the king, the sovereign of that which is righteous. This speaks of his integrity, virtue, and purity. If he is the king of righteousness, he is automatically above all others, no matter who they are. This reminds me of when Jesus dared the religious people of his day to find any sin in him.

#### John 8

44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

46 Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

47 He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

(RSV)

A third fact is confirmed in the following:

v.2 ... and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace”

The author had already mentioned that Melchizedek is called "king of Salem" in verse one; now he describes what it means. Melchizedek is called the king of "*peace*" (SALEM - peace). Some believe that "Salem" was the original name of the city of "Jerusalem". As we have seen in verse one, only God the Father and God the Son are called king or prince of peace.

<sup>3</sup>without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God—he remains a priest for all time.

This verse is packed full of information concerning Melchizedek. The first is that he is "without a *father*" (APATOR - fatherless, without father). Every human being HAS TO HAVE a father. There is no procreation if there is no father to give his seed to a woman and conceive a child. Does this mean that his father is unknown or that he has never had a father? If Melchizedek is a human being, then it may mean that his father is unknown. If he is divine, then he never had a father, for God was never born. The second fact is like the first in that he is "without a *mother*" (AMETOR - motherless, without mother). This is impossible to explain if Melchizedek is a man, since ALL have mothers. It may be that his mother is unknown. But the following sentences will confirm that Melchizedek is not a son of Adam.

The third fact is that he is completely "*without genealogy*" (AGEBEALOGETOS - unregistered as of birth, whose descent there is no record of). Melchizedek has no father, he has no mother, and there is no record of him ever being born. Does that sound likely for a person, especially if he is a king? Surely his father and mother would be known!

The fourth statement brings an end to all speculation about Melchizedek's being a man or divine.

v.3 ... having neither beginning of days nor end of life

He DOES NOT HAVE a "*beginning*" (ARCHE - a commencement) of "*days*" (HEMERA - the time space between dawn and dark) NOR an "*end*" (TELOS - the point aimed at as a limit) of "*life*" (ZOE - life, lifetime). In other words, Melchizedek is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. This is exactly what is written concerning Jesus in the book of Revelations - he is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13).

The fifth statement again settles the argument:

v.3 ... but resembling the Son of God

He is "resembling" (APHOMOIOO - to assimilate closely, make like) the Son of God. The only person ever called to be like a "son of God" in the Old Testament is the fourth person that was with the three friends of Daniel in the burning furnace (Dan. 3:25). A

person with the three friends who protected them supernaturally from the flames and deadly heat of the brazen fire. Only Jesus is called "Son of God" in the New Testament and because of this the religious elite called for his death (Mat. 26:63-68).

v.3 ... he remains a priest for all time.

This has been discussed before. Jesus is our high priest. He entered the holy of holies with his own blood and no longer had to bring any other sacrifice because his was perfect and eternal. The author will discuss this further on in his letter. So Christ "*remains*" (MENO - to stay in a given place, to dwell) a priest "*for all time*" (DIENEKES - carried through, forever, continuously). For you and me, there is no need for any other priest or high priest.

<sup>4</sup> But see how great this man *was*, to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth from the spoils!

The author continues to speak of the greatness or prominence of Melchizedek. He refers back to the tithe that Abraham gave him. He writes "*see*" (THEOREO - to be a spectator, to discern, behold). He wants his readers to think about what they are learning, and so should we. We are called to see (consider) how "*great*" (PELIKOS - indefinite in size, dignity, great) Melchizedek was. He is so great that Abraham, the great "*patriarch*" (PATRIARCHES - a progenitor, patriarch) gave him a tenth of the "*spoils*" (AKROTHINION - best of the booty, spoils, top of the heap, first fruits). Although he did not have to do this, Abraham gave the best ten percent of the spoils of war he had just won. This is how great Melchizedek was. Only the best was given to him.

<sup>5</sup> And indeed those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to collect a tenth from the people according to the law, that is, from their brothers, although *they are descended from Abraham*.

As though the author desires to place emphasis on the fact that Melchizedek is truly an eternal high priest, he refers back to an important spiritual event. He speaks of the human priesthood and how it functions. The sons of Levi, who were the descendants of the third son of Jacob and Leah, had "*received*" (LAMBANO - to take, to get a hold of) the "*priesthood*" (HIERATEIA - office of the priesthood). They received a

"commandment" (ENTOLE - authoritative prescription, precept) to collect a "tenth" (APODEKATOS - to tithe) from the people according to the "law" (NOMOS - law, a principle). The Levites, for the work of the Lord, were told to collect from their "brothers" (ADEPHOS - a brother near or remote) even though they "descended" (EXERCHOMAI - to issue, come forth) from Abraham.

<sup>6</sup> But the one who did not trace *his* descent from them collected tithes from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.

The author compares the human priesthood with the divine priesthood of Melchizedek. The human priesthood collects from every descendant of Abraham. Now Melchizedek did not trace his "*descent*" (GENEALOGEO - without descent) from the descendants of Abraham because he was before Abraham. Melchizedek DID NOT take from Abraham, but rather he "*blessed*" (EULOGEO - to speak well of, to bless) him. This is what our eternal High Priest does. He blesses the true believers and asks nothing in return. We should be like Abraham, who, without any law requiring him to do so, gave of his best to the high priest of the Lord God.

<sup>7</sup> Now without any dispute the inferior is blessed by the more prominent.

In the following verses, the author will once again prove the prominence of Melchizedek. He writes that without any "*dispute*" (ANTILOGIA - dispute, strife, contradiction) it is the "*inferior*" (ELASSON - smaller, less, under) that is "*blessed*" (EULOGEO - to speak well of, to bless) by the "*more prominent*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, best). As the writer says, this is undisputed.

<sup>8</sup> And in this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case it is testified that he lives.

The author reminds his readers that the Levites who took the tithes from God's people are mere "*mortal men*" (APOTHNESKO - to die off, be dead, death). But in the case of Melchizedek it "*testified*" (MARTUREO - to be a witness, bear record) that he (Melchizedek) "*lives*" (ZAO - to live, lifetime).

<sup>9</sup> And, *so to speak*, even Levi, the one who receives tithes, has paid tithes through Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

The author goes further in his thoughts concerning all of this by saying that Levi (his descendants), who "*receives*" (LAMBANO - to take, to get a hold of) the tithes, has "*paid tithes*" (DEKATOO - to give or take a tenth) through Abraham. How can this be? How can Levi and his descendants have paid tithes (to Melchizedek) through Abraham when they both came before them?

<sup>10</sup>For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

The answer is that Levi was in the "*loins*" (OSPHUS - the loin, hip, procreative power) of his father (Abraham) when Melchizedek "*met*" (SUNANTAO - to meet with, occur, befall) him (Abraham). Abraham was the representative of all his descendants, either physical (the Jewish nation) or spiritual (all the true believers in the Messiah). Surely the prominence of our high priest, Melchizedek, is better understood.

## 18 - *The significance of Christ's priesthood*

Hebrew 7:11-19

<sup>11</sup> Thus if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood, for on the basis of it the people received the law, what further need *is there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not said to be according to the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup> For *when* the priesthood changes, of necessity there is a change of the law also. <sup>13</sup> For the one about whom these *things* are spoken belongs to another tribe from which no one has officiated at the altar. <sup>14</sup> For *it is* evident that our Lord is a descendant of Judah, a tribe *with reference* to which Moses said nothing concerning priests. <sup>15</sup> And it is still more clear, if another priest according to the likeness of Melchizedek arises, <sup>16</sup> who has become *a priest* not according to a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. <sup>17</sup> For it is testified, "You *are* a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek."

<sup>18</sup> For on the one hand a preceding commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness <sup>19</sup> (for the law *made* nothing perfect), but on the other hand *there is* the introduction of a better hope through which we draw near to God.

(LEB)

In our present section, the author will teach his readers why the eternal high priesthood is found in the order of Melchizedek and not that of Aaron. In other words, it is an eternal celestial priesthood and not a human temporal priesthood.

<sup>11</sup> Thus if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood, for on the basis of it the people received the law, what further need *is there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not said to be according to the order of Aaron?

The author begins by explaining the limits of the Levitical priesthood. He speaks concerning the "*perfection*" (TELEIOSIS - completion, perfection, fulfillment) of the people. People came to the priests and brought sacrifices over and over again. They had to come time after time because they were never "perfect" in the eyes of the Lord. The "*Levitical*" (LEUITIKOS - relating to the Levites) "*priesthood*" (HIEROSUNE -

sacredness, priestly office) was given to Aaron and his descendants through the "*law*" (NOMOTHETEO - to legislate, receive the law) and NO ONE is justified by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16; 3:10,11).

v.11 ... what further need *is there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not said to be according to the order of Aaron?

Here, a simple question is asked. What "*further*" (ETI - yet, still, also, henceforth) "*need*" (CHEIA - necessary, need, use, want) is there for another "*priest*" (HIEREUS - a priest) to "*arise*" (ANISTEMI - to stand up, arise, lift) to the order of Melchizedek and not that of Aaron (AARON - the older brother of Moses)? In other words, since we have the law and the law gives us the priesthood in the order of Aaron, why do we need another priesthood?

<sup>12</sup> For *when* the priesthood changes, of necessity there is a change of the law also.

The author does not answer the question directly (he will later on), but rather he bases his premise on the law. He first writes when the "*priesthood*" (HIEROSUNE - sacredness, priestly office) "*changes*" (METATITHEMI - to transfer, exchange, change). This is VERY IMPORTANT because the author introduces a change in the priesthood. It will shift from an earthly human priesthood to a celestial divine priesthood. To change from a Levitical priesthood to a Melchizedek priesthood, something needed to happen to the law. Since the law is perfectly accomplished by the Messiah because he never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5) He became our perfect high priest (Heb. 4:14,15; 5:10; 6:20) and the Levitical priesthood was no longer needed and the laws concerning this priesthood also.

<sup>13</sup> For the one about whom these *things* are spoken belongs to another tribe from which no one has officiated at the altar.

We know that the priesthood belonged to the tribe of the Levites (Num. 3:6-10) and that Aaron and Moses were from this tribe. Here the author states that "*the one*", who is Jesus our high priest, is from another "*tribe*" (PHULE - an offshoot, a race, a clan). The tribe Jesus came from is that of Judah (Luke 3:23-33; Rev. 5:5-7). The author states that

from this tribe no one has "*officiated*" (PROSECHO - to hold the mind, pay attention) at the "*altar*" (THUDIASTERION - a place of sacrifice, an altar).

<sup>14</sup> For *it is* evident that our Lord is a descendant of Judah, a tribe *with reference* to which Moses said nothing concerning priests.

This seems to be common knowledge since it is written that it is "*evident*" (PRODELOS - plain before all men, obvious) that our "*Lord*" (KURIOS - supreme in authority, master) is a descendant of Judah. It was also evident because Moses did not write anything concerning the tribe of Judah and the priesthood. So, technically, Jesus can not serve as a priest in the Aaronic order.

<sup>15</sup> And it is still more clear, if another priest according to the likeness of Melchizedek arises, <sup>16</sup> who has become *a priest* not according to a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

The point the author is making is that it is "*more clear*" (KATADELOS - far more evident) that if "*another*" (HOMOIOTOS - resemblance, like as, likeness) "*priest*" (HIEREUS - a priest) according to Melchizedek came, he would have to be different. The following would have to be a difference between them. He would be a priest but not according to a "*law*" (NOMOS - law, a principle) of "*physical requirement*" (SARKIKOS ENTOLE - a precept according to the flesh) but according to the "*power*" (DUNAMIS - force, miraculous power, strength) of an "*indestructible life*" (AKATALUTOS ZOE - permanent lifetime, eternal). The difference would be that the person of a Melchizedek priesthood would absolutely need to live forever, that he would never die. Only the Messiah could accomplish this qualification!

<sup>17</sup> For it is testified,  
"You *are* a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek."

To confirm this statement the author proves what is said with the aid of a verse from the Old Testament, quoting this Psalm,

Psalms 110

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

The Hebrew word "*forever*" (OWLAM - eternity, always, everlasting) in Psalm 110:4 has the same meaning as the Greek word "*forever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, eternal) in Hebrew 7:17. The high priest of the order of Melchizedek had to have eternal life so he could remain high priest forever.

<sup>18</sup> For on the one hand a preceding commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness <sup>19</sup> (for the law *made* nothing perfect), but on the other hand *there is* the introduction of a better hope through which we draw near to God.

Why was there a second man according to the order of Melchizedek? The author gives a second reason. The first is that this man had to live forever, and the second deals with the law. The "*commandment*" (ENTOLE - authoritative injunction, precept) was "*set aside*" (ATHETESIS - cancellation, put away) because of two things. The first is because of its "*weakness*" (ASTHENES - strength less, feeble, impotent). We have already noted that the law can never make someone righteous before the Lord God.

### Romans 3

10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands, no one seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one."

(RSV)

The second is because of its "*uselessness*" (ANOPHELES - useless, unprofitable). It is unprofitable because even though one follows its directives and just misses on one point, he is cursed by God. Since we are all sinners, we will at one point or another fail and be condemned.

### Galatians 3

10 For all who are of the works of the law are under a curse: because it is said in the Writings, A curse is on everyone who does not keep on doing all the things which are ordered in the book of the law.

(BBE)

The author ends this section with a wonderful word of encouragement.

<sup>19</sup> (for the law *made* nothing perfect), but on the other hand *there is* the introduction of a better hope through which we draw near to God.

So the law makes no one "*perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, accomplish) but on the other hand (the order of Melchizedek) it "*introduces*" (EPEISAGOGE - bringing in, to enter afterwards) a "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, best) hope. Someone came (Jesus Christ) and brought a better hope through which we can "*draw near*" (EGGIZO - to make near, approach) to God.

The significance of our high priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, is that it is better than the priests and high priests of the Levitical order because Jesus cleanses the sinner perfectly and eternally by the shedding of his blood as a faultless sacrifice. This fills the heart of the true believer with a wonderful hope that resides in him throughout his life.

## 19 - *The superiority of Christ's priesthood*

Hebrews 7:20-28

<sup>20</sup> And by as much as *this was* not without an oath (for these on the one hand *have become priests* without an oath, <sup>21</sup> but he with an oath by the one who said to him,

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,  
‘*You are a priest forever*’”),

<sup>22</sup> by so much more Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

<sup>23</sup> And indeed many *have become* priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing *in office*, <sup>24</sup> but he, because he continues *forever*, holds the priesthood permanently. <sup>25</sup> Therefore also he is able to save completely those who draw near to God through him, *because he* always lives in order to intercede on their behalf.

<sup>26</sup> For a high priest such as this indeed is fitting for us, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become exalted *above* the heavens, <sup>27</sup> who does not *need every day* like the former high priests to offer up sacrifices for his own sins *and* then for the *sins* of the people, because he did this once for all *when he* offered up himself. <sup>28</sup> For the law appoints men *as* high priests who have weakness, but the statement of the oath, after the law, *appoints* a Son, who is made perfect *forever*.

(LEB)

In our last section in this chapter, the writer will describe why Christ's priesthood is far superior to the Levitical priesthood. Have you noticed that the author is spending a considerable amount of time writing on the subject of Christ and his priesthood? far more than any other subject. May we understand the crucial importance of this facet of the ministry of Christ for his disciples.

<sup>20</sup> And by as much as *this was* not without an oath (for these on the one hand *have become priests* without an oath, <sup>21</sup> but he with an oath by the one who said to him,

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,  
‘*You are a priest forever*’”),

This is the first point the author brings in order to show the superiority of Christ's priesthood. It is a fact that it was given with a solemn oath by God the Father. Ending our last section, the author speaks of a "*better hope through which we draw near to God.*" This better hope is the Messiah who possesses the High Priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. This hope was given by the Father through an "*oath*" (HORKOMOSIA - a solemn declaration, oath). While in the Levitical priesthood, men are called to become "*priests*" (HIEREUS - a priest, one who offers sacrifices) WITHOUT an "*oath*" (HORKOMOSIA - a solemn declaration, oath). Here we see that the earthly order of priests was given to Moses as a command. On the other hand, the heavenly priesthood of Christ was given by the Father with a solemn promise.

v.21 ... "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,  
'You are a priest forever'),

So this is the oath that the Father gave. The author again quotes from Ps. 110:4. This oath is also why true believers have a "better hope". God "*has sworn*" (HORKOMOSIA - a solemn declaration, an oath), so he has given his children a solemn promise on which we can stand. To guarantee his promise, it is written that God will "*not change*" (METAMELLOMAI - regret, repent) his mind. This is what God will NEVER change his mind about and that is "you (Jesus Christ) are a priest "*forever*" (AION - an age, ever more, without end)". This is the fourth time in this book that the author repeats that Jesus Christ is our high priest (5:6;6:20;7:17).

<sup>22</sup> by so much more Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

I see in this verse another reason for the superiority of Christ's priesthood. Because of the solemn oath of the Father and the perfect sacrifice of the Son, we see that Jesus is "*so much more*" (TOSOUTOS - so vast as this, so great, much) and has become the "*guarantee*" (EGGUOS - pledged, bondsman, surety) of a "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, best) "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, covenant, a testament). So the Father guarantees the ministry of the high priest of the Messiah, and Jesus also guarantees his ministry because he was the holy, perfect, and eternal sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (John 1:29,36).

<sup>23</sup> And indeed many *have become* priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing *in office*, <sup>24</sup> but he, because he continues *forever*, holds the priesthood permanently.

The author brings a third reason why Christ is superior in his priesthood. Although he has already spoken of this, the author refers to this very important point once more, and it deals with the mortality of man. He writes "*many*" (PLEISTOS - a large number, very great, most) have become priests. But why have they stopped their ministry in the Levitical priesthood? The answer is simple. They were "*prevented*" (KOLUO - forbid, to prevent by word or act) by "*death*" (THANATOS - death, deadly) from "*continuing*" (PARAMENO - to stay near, remain, abide) in office. In other words, the men just died and others had to continue this ministry in their place.

This is not so with the Messiah's priesthood. It is written that he "*continues*" (MENO - to stay, abide, continue, endure) "*forever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, forever). Jesus holds the priesthood "*permanently*" (APARABATOS - not passing away, perpetual). In other words, the priesthood of Melchizedek held by Jesus is a never ending ministry because Jesus never dies.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore also he is able to save completely those who draw near to God through him, *because he* always lives in order to intercede on their behalf.

A fourth reason that manifests that the priesthood of Jesus is superior is the following. Jesus is "*able*" (DUNAMAI - to be able, be possible, have the power to do) to "*save*" (SOZO - to save, deliver, protect) "*completely*" (PANTELES - full ended, perfectly, utterly). The problem with the human priesthood is that it never made a person perfect because it never won over sin. The sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests only covered sin temporarily. On the other hand, Jesus is able to "*save completely*". Remember what the last words of Jesus on the cross were: "

John 19

30 When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

(RSV)

The sacrificial offering of himself on the sinners' behalf is totally finished, and his resurrection is proof that death could not keep its grip on him. What we also see is that because he "*always lives*" (PANTOTE - all times, always, evermore) Jesus can "*intercede*" (ENTUGCHANO - to deal with, make intercession, to pray) on their behalf. Jesus lives forever and can intercede for his disciples forever.

<sup>26</sup>For a high priest such as this indeed is fitting for us, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become exalted *above* the heavens,

In this verse, the author gives five reasons why Jesus, our perfect high priest, is "*fitting*" (PREPO - to be suitable, it is fit, become). The author just showers his readers with thoughts so that they may grasp up to what point the old order of things has passed away. The human priesthood is terminated. The Father has introduced a new priesthood, that of Melchizedek. Our high priest is above every other high priest because of the following:

Jesus is "*holy*" (HOSIOS - pious, sacred, pure from evil conduct, righteous). We know that all of mankind has sinned without any exception (Rom. 3:23) and that is why they are not fit to be of the order of Melchizedek. Jesus is called the "Holy One" (Acts 3:14) and is fitting for this ministry.

Jesus is "*innocent*" (AKAKOS - not bad, innocent, harmless, simple, free from guilt, without fraud). Not only has he never sinned, but it seems that the only people desperately wanting to find some fault in him were the religious people of his day who assembled liars to bring some sort of mock accusations against him to the Roman authorities.

#### Matthew 26

59 Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against  
Jesus to put Him to death,

60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.  
But at last two false witnesses came forward

(NKJV)

Jesus is "*undefiled*" (AMIANOTOS - unsoiled, pure, undefiled, free from contamination). Sin has never been able to live through his flesh. He was never an instrument of sin. At one point, Jesus even dared people to stand up and convict him of sin, but they could not.

John 8

46 "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?  
(NKJV)

Jesus is "*separated*" (CHORIZO - to place room between, separate) "*from sinners*" (HARMATOLOS - sinful, sinner, wicked). In other words, Jesus is totally apart from or different from mankind. We are all sinners and so belong in one category. Jesus is in a different category, that of the sinless. He was also separated, or called, in the sense that he was to be the Messiah.

Jesus is also "*exalted*" (HUPSELOS - highly esteemed, exalted on high, lofty). He was with the Father before time, came to earth to fulfill the plan of redemption, and when he was raised from death, he ascended into the heavens where he is sitting at the right hand of the Father. He is exalted and, as we see in the book of Revelations, he is worshipped by the angelic beings.

Revelation 5

12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

(NKJV)

The author continues to describe the un-surpassing superiority of Christ's priesthood in the following verse.

<sup>27</sup> who does not *need every day* like the former high priests to offer up sacrifices for his own sins *and* then for the *sins* of the people, because he did this once for all *when he* offered up himself.

The fact that Jesus is sinless is brought to mind. The priests of the Levitical priesthood "*every day*" (HEMERA - the time space between dawn and dark) had to "*offer*" (ANAPHERO - to take up, bring, offer up) sacrifices for "*his own*" (IDIOS - pertaining to self, one's own) sins. Notice that there were NO EXCEPTIONS. These high priests were sinners and needed atonement for their own sins before they could minister to the people. Only after they were purified from their sins were they able to offer up sacrifices for other people. The contrast with Christ is that he offered "*himself*" (HEAUTOU - him, her, my, your) and not some animal for the sins of the people, and he did this "*once and for all*" (EPHAPAX - upon one occasion only, once and for all). This is a very strong statement, which the author will repeat later on. The sacrifice for the atonement for sins was done by Christ ONCE AND FOR ALL. His atonement is perfect and eternal. Nothing can be added or taken away from his sacrifice on the cross. True believers have been reconciled to the Father through the death of the Messiah and have become holy and sinless in his eyes.

#### Colossians 1

21 And you, who in the past were cut off and at war with God in your minds through evil works, he has now made one

22 In the body of his flesh through death, so that you might be holy and without sin and free from all evil before him:

(BBE)

Because the sacrifice of Christ brought atonement to the believer there is now peace - the enmity has ended.

#### Romans 5

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

(NKJV)

The author comes to a general conclusion in the last verse in our present section.

<sup>28</sup> For the law appoints men *as* high priests who have weakness, but the statement of the oath, after the law, *appoints* a Son, who is made perfect *forever*.

The law that was given through Moses "*appoints*" (KATHISTEMI - to place down, constitute, ordain) men as high priests. The problem was that they had a "*weakness*" (ASTHENEIA - feebleness of mind or body). They (as with all of mankind) were sinners. When the proper time came, God intervened with a "*statement*" (LOGOS - something said, utterance) of the "*oath*" (HORKOMOSIA - affirmation made on oath, an oath). This was done AFTER THE LAW when he appointed a Son. We have seen that this is the Christ who is "*made perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, consecrate, finish, perfect) "*forever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, forever).

The living Son of God is the perfect sacrifice forever and ever. Those who truly believe in him as their Savior can now rest from their labors, knowing that they are forgiven. Not because of what they have or can do, but because of what their high priest has done for them at the cross.

## 20 - Our glorious High priest

Hebrews 8:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Now *this is* the main point in what has been said: we have a high priest such as this, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord set up, not man. <sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices; therefore *it was necessary for* this one also to have something that he offers. <sup>4</sup> Now if he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, *because there* are those who offer the gifts according to the law, <sup>5</sup> who serve a sketch and shadow of the heavenly *things*, just as Moses was warned *when he* was about to complete the tabernacle, for he says, "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain." <sup>6</sup> But now he has attained a more excellent ministry, by as much as he is also mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted upon better promises.

(LEB)

In this section the author will recapitulate what has already been taught concerning Jesus as the believer's high priest.

<sup>1</sup> Now *this is* the main point in what has been said: we have a high priest such as this, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven

He is explaining the "*main point*" (KEPHALAION - a principle thing, the main point) of what has been "*said*" (LEGO - to put forth, say, speak, tell). In one way, this is a short summary or the conclusion of all that has been written so far concerning Jesus being superior to the Levitical priesthood.

Please note that the author writes "*we have*". It is definite, Jesus has been appointed to be our (*we*) high priest. We have seen that this was promised by the Father and that he has called the Son to have this ministry in favor of the Redeemed. May we never forget that Christ is the ONLY mediator between God and mankind.

1 Timothy 2

5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,  
6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,  
(NKJV)

The author will write an amazing statement concerning Jesus, the celestial high priest.

v.1 ... we have a high priest such as this, who sat down at the right hand of the throne  
of the Majesty in heaven

This is our high priest who is "*such as this*" (TOIOUTOS - truly this, of this sort, like, such). Here the author will bring a new point concerning Christ. He "*sat down*" (KATHIZO - to set down, to settle, to appoint) at the "*right hand*" (DEXIOS - the right side, right hand) of God. We know that this term manifests the highest place one can have, which is next to the ruling authority. Christ is presently sitting at the right hand of the "*throne*" (THRONOS - a stately seat, a potentate) of the "*Majesty*" (MEGALOSUNE - greatness, majesty) in heaven. This word is only used three times in the New Testament, twice in Hebrews and once in the book of Jude. In other words, there is no greater place of honor that could have been given to Jesus, our high priest.

<sup>2</sup> a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord set up, not man.

Jesus is a "*minister*" (LEITOURGOS - a public servant, a benefactor) of the "*sanctuary*" (HAGION - a sacred thing, a holy place). A sanctuary is a holy place devoted to God. It is also a refuge for weary souls. As we see, Jesus is serving. His celestial ministry deals with the sanctuary of God. He is also a minister of the "*true*" (ALETHINOS - truthful, true, veracious) "*tabernacle*" (SKENE - a tent, cloth hut, the movable temple of God). Why does the author speak of the "*true tabernacle*"? The answer is given in the next phrase, which the Lord "*set up*" (PEGNUMI - to fix, set up a tent, pitch) NOT man. The true tabernacle is the one the Lord has made in the heavens, not the one that man has made on earth.

<sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices;  
therefore *it was necessary for* this one also to have something that he offers.

Once more, the author compares the Levitical priesthood with the order of Melchizedek. The Levitical priests were "*appointed*" (KATHISTEMI - to designate, appoint, ordain) to "*offer*" (PROSPHERO - to lead, deal with, present unto) both "*gifts*" (DORON - a gift offered in expression of honor) and "*sacrifices*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice literally or figuratively). Gifts were offerings that were "bloodless". Such things as: fine flower, cakes, bread, corn, first fruits of the field. These were mainly offerings of thanksgiving, while the sacrifices were of "blood," where an animal would be sacrificed for a sin offering. This was the main ministry of an earthly priest.

v.3 ... therefore *it was necessary for* this one also to have something that he offers.

Speaking of "*this one*" (TIS - some or any person or object) which is Jesus Christ. It was "*necessary*" (ANAGKAIOS - needful, necessary, indispensable, required) for Jesus to have something that he "*offers*" (PROSPHERO - to lead, deal with, present unto). We have seen that Jesus offered his own body as a perfect sacrifice for the atonement of the believer's sins.

<sup>4</sup> Now if he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, *because there* are those who offer the gifts according to the law

The author reminds his readers that if Jesus were on "*earth*" (GE - soil, a region, country, earth), he would not have even been a priest (he is speaking of the Levitical priesthood). We have seen that Jesus is of the tribe of Judah, which the priesthood has not been given to by the Father. He states why this is so. It is because those who "*offer*" (PROSPHERO - to lead, deal with, present unto) the gifts do so according to the "*law*" (NOMOS - law, principle, regulation). Here the author is speaking of the laws given by God which govern the Levitical priesthood.

<sup>5</sup> who serve a sketch and shadow of the heavenly *things*, just as Moses was warned *when he* was about to complete the tabernacle, for he says, "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain."

We are told that all these laws which deal with the Levitical priesthood, the tabernacle and all that deals with the worship of God "*serve*" (LATREUO - to minister to God, serve, worship) a "*sketch*" (HUPODEIGMA - an exhibit for imitation, example) and

"*shadow*" (SKIA - shade, shadow, an image) of certain "heavenly" (EPOURANIOS - above the sky, celestial) things. The earthly ministry of the priests and the earthly tabernacle were a representation of the true celestial high priest and tabernacle found in heaven. The author refers to an encounter between God and Moses.

v.5 ...just as Moses was warned *when he* was about to complete the tabernacle, for he says, "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain."

Moses was "*warned*" (CHREMATIZO - to utter an oracle, speak, to give a divine command) by the Lord God about the tabernacle. This was the warning to Moses: "See to it that you "*make*" (EPITELEO - to fulfill further, terminate, finish) EVERYTHING and not just certain things according to the "*pattern*" (TUPOS - a die, a stamp, a shape, a pattern) which was shown to you on the "*mountain*" (OROS - a mountain, hill, rise). This is taken from the following verse:

#### Exodus 25

40 And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

(RSV)

Moses DID NOT have any choice. He absolutely had to follow God's instructions concerning the Levitical ministries and all that dealt with the tabernacle. Just as we DO NOT have a choice concerning Jesus being the High Priest in the order of Melchizedek and all that deals with his perfect sacrifice. Moses received his instructions from God, and we receive our instructions from the Word of the Almighty.

<sup>6</sup>But now he has attained a more excellent ministry, by as much as he is also mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted upon better promises.

In our last verse, the author reminds his readers that Jesus has "*attained*" (TUGCHANO - to attain or secure an object, to hit the mark) a "*more excellent*" (DIAPHOROS - surpassing, more excellent) ministry. As we have seen, his ministry as high priest is not comparable to the earthly ministry. The author gives one final reason why this is so. It is because Jesus is the "*mediator*" (MESITES - a go between, reconciler, mediator) of a

"*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, nobler) "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, covenant, testament). It is a better covenant because it has been "*enacted*" (NOMOTHETEO - to legislate, establish) upon "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, nobler) "*promises*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise). We have seen that this promise deals with the coming Messiah and his perfect and eternal sacrifice which supplies righteousness for the true believer.

We have come to the end of our first section of the book of Hebrews. This section is called "The Superiority of Christ" (1:1-8:6). We have seen that Jesus is superior to the angels, Moses, and the human high priest. We have also seen that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is of the order of Melchizedek and is the eternal high priest who intercedes in favor of all of the Father's children.

## 21 - *The promise of God's New Covenant*

Hebrews 8:7-13

<sup>7</sup> For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, occasion would not have been sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> For in finding fault with them he says,

“Behold, days are coming, says the Lord,  
when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah,

<sup>9</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers  
on the day I took hold of them by my hand  
to lead them out of the land of Egypt,  
because they did not continue in my covenant  
and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> For this *is* the covenant that I will decree with the house of Israel  
after those days, says the Lord:

I am putting my laws in their minds  
and I will write them on their hearts,  
and I will be *their* God  
and they will be *my* people.

<sup>11</sup> And they will not teach each one his fellow citizen  
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.

<sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful toward their wrongdoings,  
and I will not remember their sins *any* longer.”

<sup>13</sup> In calling *it* new, he has declared the former *to be old*. Now what is becoming  
obsolete and growing old *is* near to disappearing.

We are beginning the second section of the book of Hebrews. In this section (8:7-10:18) the author will explain in what way the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant under Moses. God explains why a New Covenant was necessary.

<sup>7</sup> For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, occasion would not have been sought for a second.

The opening phrase makes a bold statement, saying that if the first "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, a contract, testament), which is the one given by the Lord God to Moses in Exodus 20, had been "*faultless*" (AMEMPTOS (irreproachable, blameless) it would not have been "*sought*" (ZETEO - to seek, to go about to find) for a "*second*" (DEUTEROS - second in time, place or rank). In other words, if the first one had been perfect, there would have been no need used to make a second one. The problem is that the first one WAS NOT perfect, and in a few verses we will see why it was not perfect.

<sup>8</sup> For in finding fault with them he says,  
"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord,  
when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah,

What is important to remember is that it was not man who saw fault in this covenant, but the Lord God himself! Here we see God's declaration on why this covenant had a fault. For in "*finding fault*" (MEMPHOMAI - to blame, find fault) with THEM, the fault was in THEM. The Israelites with whom God had made this covenant are referred to as "them." This is important to understand. The fault WAS NOT with God, but with the people with whom God made the covenant. It was not God who could not keep his part in the covenant, but the children of Jacob! Seeing that they could not keep their part of the covenant, God made this promise (the author refers to what God had promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34),

v.8 ..."Behold, days are coming, says the Lord,  
when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah,

The "*days*" (HEMERA - the time space between dawn and dark), in this case, refer to a specific time in human history. A time is "*coming*" (ERCHOMAI - to come or go, to come into being, become known). God said that at this point in time he will "*complete*" (SUNTELEO - to complete entirely, finish) a "*new covenant*" (KAINOS DIATHEKE - an

unprecedented covenant). This brand new, never heard before, covenant was to be made with the "*house*" (OIKOS - a dwelling, family, house) of Israel and the house of Judah. In other words, this new covenant was for all the descendants of Jacob. It was for them since the first covenant was with them ONLY.

<sup>9</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers  
on the day I took hold of them by my hand  
to lead them out of the land of Egypt,  
because they did not continue in my covenant  
and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

Here we see the explanation of why a new covenant was necessary. This new covenant was not going to be like the "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, covenant, testament) that God had made with their "*fathers*" (PATER - a father, literally or figuratively). This refers to their ancestors when God "*took hold*" (EPILAMBANOMAI - to seize, take, catch, to rescue) of them. Notice that the Lord gives the picture of taking someone by the hand, as a father holds the hand of his child and leads him towards their destination. In his grace, God had led them out of slavery, out of Egypt (AIGUPTOS - the land of the Nile). But something went wrong. Once they were safe and sound, the Lord made a covenant with his people, which they agreed to keep, as we see in the following verse:

#### Exodus 24

3 Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do."

(RSV)

Something went wrong. The Israelites did not "*continue*" (GINOMAI - to cause to be, to become) in God's covenant. God had kept his part of the covenant, but the Israelites did not. As we so often see in the Old Testament, the children of Abraham disobey the Lord and go as far as to worship other gods. Because they broke the covenant, God "*disregarded*" (AMELEO - to make careless of, to neglect) them.

<sup>10</sup>For this *is* the covenant that I will decree with the house of Israel  
after those days, says the Lord:  
I am putting my laws in their minds  
and I will write them on their hearts,  
and I will be *their* God  
and they will be *my* people.

Verse ten and eleven describe what this new covenant will look like. We first see that it is the Lord God who, once more, makes a covenant with his people. We also see that this is a "*decree*" (DIATITHEMAI - appoint, testator, to make or enter into a covenant) that is for the "*house of Israel*," so it is for God's people. What is astonishing is that the first covenant with Moses was written in stone tablets (Ex. 24:12) but this time God will be "*putting*" (DIDOMI - to give, bestow, bring forth) his "*laws*" (NOMOS - law, principle, regulations) in their "*minds*" (DIANOIA - deep thought, mind, understanding) and in their "*hearts*" (KARDIA - the heart, fig. the thoughts and feelings of the mind). The covenant will no longer be outside of the person but inside of him, in his heart and mind. In the New Testament, this is called being "born again" or "born of the Spirit". The natural consequence of having God's law in our hearts and minds is that he will be our "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer) and we will be his "*people*" (LAOS - a people). These are referred to as being chosen (1 Cor. 1:27,28; James 2:5; 1 Peter 2:4,9) by God to become his people.

<sup>11</sup>And they will not teach each one his fellow citizen  
and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.

The author continues to show the difference between the Old and New Covenants. They (the true believers) will not "*teach*" (DIDASKO - to teach, to impart instruction) each one his "*fellow citizen*" (PLESION - a neighbor, a fellow-man). Nor will they have to teach his "*brother*" (ADEPHOS - a brother, near or remote). The reason is that they will "*know*" (GINOSKO - to know, be aware of, understand) the Lord. With the New Covenant, the heart and mind are renewed and God's words flood the new believer. It is in this sense that he does not need to be taught. His eyes were opened and his ears became able to understand and receive the gospel story. God is good because this is

for the "*least*" (MIKROS - small, least, little) of men to the "*greatest*" (MEGAS - exceedingly, great, mighty). No matter who he is, each and every person that comes to Christ for salvation will be renewed in heart and mind.

### 2 Corinthians 5

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,  
(NKJV)

The following verse is (to my mind) one of the most touching and assuring verses in the Bible. This verse alone is necessary for the true believer to be joyful and eternally thankful.

<sup>12</sup>For I will be merciful toward their wrongdoings,  
and I will not remember their sins *any longer*."

This is why God has promised a New Covenant ushered in by Jesus Christ the Messiah. It was given because he had promised two things. The first is that he will be "*merciful*" (HILEOS - propitious, merciful) towards their (our) "*wrongdoings*" (ADIKIA - wrongfulness of character, unjust, unrighteousness of heart and life). God promises to be merciful towards sinful people. This is how God manifests his mercy on repentant children of Adam. He says he "*will not*" (ON - not at all, by no means, in no case) "*remember*" (MNAOMAI - to bear in mind, recollect) their "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offense, a violation of the divine law) "*any longer*" (ETI - yet, after that, any longer). In other words, God promises to never speak of our sins nor bring any judgment because of sin to any truly repentant person who calls upon the name of Christ to be forgiven.

### Acts 16

30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."  
(NKJV)

May this verse be solidly anchored in your heart. May it be a foundation for the love you manifest toward God. May you rejoice in God's eternal mercy and the New Covenant he has made. Tell others of this "good news" so that they might believe and be forgiven!

<sup>13</sup>In calling *it* new, he has declared the former *to be old*. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old *is* near to disappearing.

The writer's conclusion is the following. By calling it "*new*". (KAINOS - new, recently made, unprecedented) God has declared the former( the Old Covenant under Moses) to be "*old*" (PALAIOO - to become worn out, declare obsolete, decay, made old). Although the Hebrew people to whom the writer was writing continued to see the old order of things, these things would one day be "*disappearing*" (to fail from age, be obsolescent). One day, when Christ comes back, there will be no doubt that the Old Covenant has passed away and that Christ is the long awaited Messiah of the New Covenant.

## 22 - *The earthly sanctuary*

Hebrews 9:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Now the first *covenant* had regulations for worship and the earthly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup> For a tent was prepared, the first *one*, in which *were* the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the loaves, which is called the holy place. <sup>3</sup> And after the second curtain *was* a tent called the holy of holies, <sup>4</sup> containing the golden incense altar and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which *were* a golden jar containing the manna and the rod of Aaron that budded and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup> And above it *were* the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, about which it is not now *possible* to speak in detail.

(LEB)

In our present section, the author will begin to explain how the earthly sanctuary represented the new covenant and its heavenly sanctuary. We will see that it is Jesus who is the link between the two. The author will take the entire chapter to show the weaknesses and limitations of the Old Covenant regulations in regards to the New Covenant.

<sup>1</sup> Now the first *covenant* had regulations for worship and the earthly sanctuary.

Remember that the author is writing to Jewish people who have been taught the Scriptures. It must be understood that they understood what the writer was explaining in regards to the sanctuary. When we read "*the first covenant*", it is also understood that it deals with the one God has made with the Jewish people through Moses at Mount Sinai (Ex. 20). This first covenant had "*regulations*" (DIKAIOMA - a statute, a decision, ordinance) for the "*worship*" (LATREIA - ministrations of God, divine service) and the "*earthly*" (KOSMIKOS - mundane, corrupt, worldly) "*sanctuary*" (HAGION - a sacred thing, holy place, sanctuary).

I would like you to notice that the Lord God DID NOT leave it up to man to administer his sanctuary nor his worship as they pleased. God gave his regulations and that was the way it was to be done. I believe that it is the same today! True believers ARE NOT

to worship and serve the Lord as they desire but do what reflects his holy character. Jesus said the following:

John 4

23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

(NKJV)

I sometimes wonder how God sees the way that many churches are led today. Are they pleasing to the Lord? Are people worshipping in truth or in the flesh?

<sup>2</sup>For a tent was prepared, the first *one*, in which *were* the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the loaves, which is called the holy place.

The author speaks of a "*tent*" (SKENE - a tent or cloth hut, habitation); this is also called the "tabernacle of meeting" (Ex. 27:21; 28:43; 29:4). The "*tent*" was set up here and there as the people of Israel wandered through the desert. When they stopped and settled, the "*tent*" would be erected. The author speaks of the "*first one*" because, as you will see, the sanctuary was made of two tents. The first one was to be entered by the priest, whose service came up. To this the author gives a rapid description of what lies inside the tent.

There was the "*lampstand*" (LUCHNIA - a lamp-stand, candlestick, candelabrum). It stood opposite the table of showbread and had three branches on each side, with a main branch in the middle. This probably portrayed that the coming Messiah would be the light of the world.

There was also the table on which was the showbread, also called "bread of presence". On every Sabbath day, twelve new loaves of bread, on behalf of each tribe of Israel, were placed on this table. This may have portrayed the coming Messiah as the "bread of life". The first tent was called the "*holy place*" (HAGION - a sacred thing, a holy place, a sanctuary). Only the Levitical priests were appointed to minister to the Lord in this first tent. Notice that the author does not mention the "alter of incense" that was also inside, along with the showbread and the lampstand.

<sup>3</sup>And after the second curtain *was* a tent called the holy of holies,

In this verse, the author speaks of what we can call the second tent. There was a curtain to enter the first tent, or the holy place, where, as we have seen, certain things were placed. But there was adjacent to the first tent a second, which was separated from the first one by a "*curtain*" (KATAPETASMA - something spread thoroughly, veil). When this curtain was opened, one would enter the "*holy of holies*". The "*holy of holies*" is also called "The Most Holy Place", where is laid the ark of the covenant covered by the mercy seat and the cherubim. This "*holy of holies*" was to be entered only once a year by the High Priest with the blood of the sacrificed lamb, which was sprinkled on the mercy seat (cover) of the ark.

<sup>4</sup>containing the golden incense altar and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which *were* a golden jar containing the manna and the rod of Aaron that budded and the tablets of the covenant.

The writer speaks of a "*golden*" (CHRUSEOS - made of gold) "*incense altar*" (THUMIASTERION - a place of fumigation, censer). This is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but it seems that the High Priest would enter the "holy of holies" with an incense burner. The author describes what was inside the "holy of holies." There was the "*ark*" (KIBOTOS - a box, ark) of the "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, a contract, testament). Inside the ark of the covenant were three precious things.

The first was the "golden jar" in which we could find the "*manna*" (MANNA - an edible gum). This was the daily food that the Lord God provided every morning for the sustenance of his people. He faithfully did this until his people entered the Promise Land (Joshua 5:12). The second was the rod of Aaron, which had budded. After the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16) the Lord God made it very plain that it was Aaron and Moses who were the leaders by making Aaron's rod blossom and even yield ripe almonds (Num. 17). Finally, there were the "tablets of the covenant" which Moses had brought down from Mount Sinai with the inscribed Ten Commandments. These three things were inside the ark of the covenant.

<sup>5</sup>And above it *were* the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, about which it is not now *possible* to speak in detail.

In our last verse, the author describes what is "*above*" (HUPERANO - above, upward, over). There were the "*cherubim*" (CHEROUBIM - the plural form of Cherub). The cherubim were an order of celestial being (angels) described in the Old Testament (Ez. 1:1-28) and New Testament (Rev. 4:1-11). They are called cherubim of "*glory*" (DOXA - glory, dignity, praise, honor). They were above "*overshadowing*" (KATASKIAZO - to over shade, cover, shadow) the "*mercy seat*" (HILASTERION - an expiatory place, propitiation), which is the cover of the ark. It seems that the author sees fit to stop the description of the holy of holies. He writes that it is "*not now possible*" (NUN - present time, now, immediate) to speak in "*detail*" (MEROS - behalf, partly, portion). The aim of this section was not to perfectly describe what was already known but to explain what might not be known. As we will see in our next section.

## 23 - *The limits of the earthly service*

Hebrews 9:6-10

<sup>6</sup>Now these things having been prepared in this way, the priests enter into the first tent *continually as they* accomplish their service, <sup>7</sup>but only the high priest *enters* into the second tent once a year, not without blood, which he offers on behalf of himself and the *sins* of the people committed in ignorance. <sup>8</sup>The Holy Spirit *was* making this clear, *that* the way *into* the holy place *was* not yet revealed, *while* the first tent was still in existence, <sup>9</sup>which *was* a symbol for the present time, in which both the gifts and sacrifices which were offered were not able to perfect the worshiper with respect to the conscience, <sup>10</sup>concerning *instead* only food and drink and different washings, regulations of outward things imposed until the time of setting *things* right.

(LEB)

In this section, the author continues to explain how the sanctuary of the Old Testament had its limitations and was also a reflection (imperfect as it was) of the true sanctuary to come with the Messiah as the High priest in the order of Melchizedek.

<sup>6</sup>Now these things having been prepared in this way, the priests enter into the first tent *continually as they* accomplish their service,

The words "these things" refer to what has been written in Heb. 9:1-5. These things have "*been prepared*" (KATASKEUAZO - prepare thoroughly, make, ordain) in this way. The author will bring to mind how the service to the sanctuary functioned. First, the "*priests*" (HIERATEUO - to be a priest) "*enter*" (EISEIMI - to go, to enter into) the first "*tent*" (SKENE - a tent or cloth hut, habitation). We saw in our last section that the sanctuary was divided into two very distinct rooms. These priests would only enter the first tent. They would never go into the second tent. For this was a service to God that only the High Priest was ordained to do. The priest entered the first part "*continually*" (DIAPANTOS - through all time, constantly). Every day they would "*accomplish*" (EPITELEO - to fulfill further, undergo) their "*service*" (LATREIA - ministration of God, divine service).

<sup>7</sup> but only the high priest *enters* into the second *tent* once a year, not without blood, which he offers on behalf of himself and the *sins* of the people committed in ignorance.

The author now turns to the service of the second tent. Notice that it was "*only*" (MONOS - remaining, sole, single, alone) the high priest who could do the following. Only he enters into the "*second*" (DEUTEROS - second in time, place or rank) tent. The second tent is the "holy of holies". The high priest went into this second tent only "once a year" on the day of atonement. He dared not enter "*without*" (CHORIS - separately, apart from, without) "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of men or animal). This blood came from the sacrifice that had just been offered before the high priest came into the tabernacle in the wilderness. The blood had been "*offered*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, lead to, present unto) on behalf of himself. Like all human beings, the high priest was not without sin and needed atonement for himself and also for the sins of the people committed in ignorance (AGNOEMA - a thing ignored, error, or shortcoming).

Please keep in mind that atonement was required not only for sins committed voluntarily, but also for those committed in ignorance. When the law is broken, whether by volition or omission, there is a penalty to be paid.

<sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit *was* making this clear, *that* the way *into* the holy place *was* not yet revealed, *while* the first tent was still in existence,

Here we see one of the limitations of the earthly tent. Notice the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that was "*making this clear*" (DELOO - to make plain, declare, to make known). This is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. Remember what Jesus said:

#### John 16

12 "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

(RSV)

v.8 ... *that the way into the holy place was not yet revealed, while the first tent was still in existence,*

What was the Holy Spirit making clear? It was that the "*way*" (HODOS - a road, journey) into the "holy place", which is the second tent—the holy of holies—was not yet "*revealed*" (PHANEROO - to render apparent, appear, manifest). In other words, for the people living during those times, including the high priests, they did not understand the symbolism and the future reality the earthly sanctuary represented. As long as the first tent was still in "*existence*" (STASIS - a standing, position) the true way into the second tent was not fully known.

We have seen that the tabernacle in the wilderness was built and governed by the laws given by the Almighty to Moses. As long as the "Law" was not done away with through the sacrifice of Christ, the celestial way into the holy of holies was hidden. That is why Jesus said that he had not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it.

Matthew 5

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

(NKJV)

The author now states what the two tents symbolized.

<sup>9</sup> which *was* a symbol for the present time, in which both the gifts and sacrifices which were offered were not able to perfect the worshiper with respect to the conscience,

The service to the tabernacle in the wilderness was a "*symbol*" (PARABOLE - a similitude, a figure, a comparison of one thing with another) for the "*present*" (ENISTEMI - to place on hand, be instant) "*time*" (KAIROS - an occasion, proper time, due measure). It manifested to those who came after Christ that the "*gifts*" (DORON - a present, gift, offering) and the "*sacrifices*" (THUSIA - sacrifice, a victim) which were offered (PLEASE NOTE WHAT WILL BE SAID) were "*not able*" (DUNAMAI - not able, not possible, not capable) to "*perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, accomplish, fulfill, to make

perfect) the worshipper with respect to the "*conscience*" (SUNEIDESIS - co-perception, moral conscientiousness). All the sacrifices for the atonement of your sins (in the Old Testament) did not stop your conscience from being free of all guilt.

<sup>10</sup> concerning *instead* only food and drink and different washings, regulations of outward things imposed until the time of setting *things* right.

If the service of the tabernacle in the wilderness did make your conscience perfect, it did effectively work well for other aspects of the service. Such as the food and drinks offered. The different "*washings*" (BAPTISMOS - ablution, washing) such as the washing of the entrails of certain animals that were offered. It worked well for the different "*regulations*" (DIKAIOMA - an equitable deed, ordinance) of all outward things (that the priests had to do). All of this was to be done "*until*" (MECHRI - up to a certain point, until) the "*time*" (KAIROS - a set or proper time) came. This would be a time of "*setting things right*" (DIORTHOSIS - reflecting, reformation, a making straight).

The time had come for the old to pass away because it was not perfect. The Almighty reformed the tabernacle in the wilderness by and through his beloved Son.

## 24 - *The heavenly sanctuary*

Hebrews 9:11-15

<sup>11</sup>But Christ has arrived *as* a high priest of the good *things* to come. Through the greater and more perfect tent not made by hands, that is, not of this creation, <sup>12</sup>and not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once for all into the *most* holy place, obtaining eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled sanctify *them* for the ritual purity of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve *the* living God?

<sup>15</sup>And because of this, he is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that, *because* a death has taken place for the redemption of transgressions *committed* during the first covenant, those who are the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

(LEB)

In our present section, the writer will explain why the heavenly sanctuary has eclipsed the earthly one. He gives several reasons, so let's look at them.

<sup>11</sup>But Christ has arrived *as* a high priest of the good *things* to come...

The first and main reason has to do with the person of Christ. In fact, everything rests on Jesus. It is written that Jesus has become the "*high priest*" (ARCHIEREUS - the high priest, chief priest) of "*good things*" (AGATHOS - good, benefit, excellent, upright) "*to come*" (MELLO - to intend, be about to be). Here we see that it is Jesus Christ who is the foundation of the "good things to come". But what are some of the "good things to come"? We can think of: redemption, sanctification, purification, forgiveness, adoption, being heirs, and many other things. All these things are wrapped up in what we call "being saved".

v. 11 ... Through the greater and more perfect tent not made by hands, that is, not of this creation,

A second reason concerns the sanctuary itself, the "*tent*" (SKENE - a tent or cloth hut, the desert tabernacle). The heavenly sanctuary is far "*greater*" (MEIZON - larger, older, greater, more) and more "*perfect*" (TELEIOS - complete, full of age, perfect) because it is NOT "*made by hands*" (CHEIROPOIETOS - of human construction). One of the problems with the earthly sanctuary was that it was made by men with earthly materials. This made this sanctuary temporary and prey to the elements (fire, wind, etc..). In fact, the human sanctuary did vanish, and no one knows what happened to it. Christ is the high priest of the sanctuary, which is not made of this "*creation*" (IDEA - form, external appearance, countenance). It is celestial and not terrestrial.

<sup>12</sup>and not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood...

This is a third reason why the celestial sanctuary is superior to the earthly one. This time it concerns the "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood from men or animals). The earthly sanctuary deals with the blood of "*goats*" (TRAGOS - a he-goat, a goat) and "*calves*" (MOSCHOS - a young bullock, calf). These were some of the animals that were sacrificed and their blood used in ceremonies for atonement. These sacrifices had to be continually made where as the blood of Christ, "*his own*" (IDIOS - pertaining to self, one's own) blood, was offered for the sacrifice pertaining to the celestial sanctuary. The animal's blood never permanently deals with the problem of sin, but the blood of Christ does.

v. 12 ... he entered once for all into the *most* holy place, obtaining eternal redemption.

A fourth reason why the celestial sanctuary is perfect is the fact that Jesus "*entered*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in) "*once and for all*" (EPHAPAX - upon one occasion, once and for all) in the most "*holy place*" (HAGION - a sacred thing, holiest of all). This would be the "*holy of holies*". The high priest of the Levitical order entered once a year with the blood, and this had to be repeated year after year.

#### Exodus 30

10 Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns once a year; with the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations; it is most holy to the LORD."

(RSV)

Leviticus 16

34 "This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

(NKJV)

As a result, "obtaining" (HEURISKO-find, get, obtain) "eternal" (AIONIOS-perpetual, eternal, forever) "redemption" (LUTROSIS-a ransoming, redeemed, deliverance from the penalty of sin) is achieved. In other words, the sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient to bring perfect redemption to the repentant believer. It is blasphemous to teach that the sacrifice of Christ has to be "relived" or done over and over again the way some religions teach!

<sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled sanctify *them* for the ritual purity of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve *the* living God?

In these two verses, the author explains what is meant by the previous verse. We can say that the subject is the blood that is offered for the forgiveness of sins. On one hand you have the blood of "*goats*" (TRAGOS - a he-goat, a goat) and of "*bulls*" (TAUROS - a bullock, bull, ox). The author also speaks of the "*ashes*" (SPODOS - ashes) of a "*young cow*" (DAMALIS - a heifer). We see this in Num. 19:2-10 where the ashes of the heifer after it had been burned were kept and later sprinkled on those who were ceremonially impure. This would cleanse them. Those who were "*defiled*" (KOINOO - to make profane, defile, unclean) would be "*sanctified*" (HAGIAZO - purification, holiness). Their "*flesh*" (SARX - the flesh of the body, carnally minded) would attain ritual "*purity*" (KATHAROTES - cleanness, ceremonially pure). This is what the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the burnt heifer would do.

The argument of the writer is the following: if those things made you ceremonially pure, "*how much more*" (MALLON - more, better, a greater degree, by far) will the "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of man or animals) of "*Christ*" (CHRISTOS - anointed, the

Messiah) do this? He "*offered*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, deal with, offer up) himself through the "*eternal Spirit*", that is, the Holy Spirit "*without blemish*" (AMOMOS - unblemished, faultless) to God. This time the offering to God was not the blood of animals or ashes of a heifer; it was the blood of the eternal Son-Jesus the Messiah.

v. 14 ... cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve *the* living God?

We have seen that Christ gives eternal redemption (v.12), but now the author adds to the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ. His redemption will "*cleanse*" (KATHARIZO - to cleanse, make clean, purify) the believer's "*conscience*" (SUNEIDESIS - co-perception, conscience, the soul) from "*dead*" (NEKROS - a corpse, dead) "*works*" (ERGON - to work, toil, labor). His blood clears our conscience of all the things we have done that we are ashamed of, so that we can now "*serve*" (LATREIA - ministration of God, divine service) the living God.

<sup>15</sup> And because of this, he is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that, *because* a death has taken place for the redemption of transgressions *committed* during the first covenant, those who are the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

After giving several reasons why the heavenly sanctuary is far better than the earthly one, the author comes to his conclusion when he writes, "because of this." That is, because of what has just been said, Jesus is the "*mediator*" (MESITES - a go-between to restore peace, a reconciler) of a new covenant. We have seen that the old covenant has been done away with because it was not perfect. Man could not keep his part of the covenant. This new covenant is founded on the "*death*" (THANATOS - death, literally or figuratively) of Jesus Christ. This brings the "*redemption*" (APOLUTROSIS - ransom in full, salvation) from "*transgressions*" (PARABASIS - violation, a disregarding of the Mosaic Law) that were committed during the first covenant.

The benefits of this new covenant are for those who are "*called*" (KALEO - to call, bid, invite, to name) so that they "*may receive*" (LAMBANO - to take, accept, get hold of) the "*promise*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise) of "*eternal*" (AIONIOS -

perpetual, eternal, everlasting) "*inheritance*" (KLERONOMIA - patrimony, heir ship, inheritance).

Peter speaks of this inheritance in his first letter.

1 Peter 1

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(NKJV)

May all true believers rejoice that Jesus Christ is the celestial sanctuary's high priest, having entered once and for all with his own blood to procure eternal salvation for all who honestly call on his name for salvation.

## 25 - *Death and blood*

Hebrews 9:16-22

<sup>16</sup>For where *there is* a will, *it is* a necessity *for* the death of the one who made the will to be established. <sup>17</sup>For a will *is* in force concerning those who are dead, since *it is* never in force when the one who made the will is alive. <sup>18</sup>Therefore not even the first *covenant* was ratified without blood. <sup>19</sup>For *when* every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, *he* took the blood of calves with water and scarlet wool and hyssop *and* sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people, <sup>20</sup>saying,

“This *is* the blood of the covenant that God has commanded for you.”

<sup>21</sup>And likewise he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the utensils of service with the blood. <sup>22</sup>Indeed, nearly everything is purified with blood according to the law, and apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

(LEB)

In our section, the author will speak about the importance of blood in establishing a covenant. In the Old Testament it was of the animals, and in the New it was of the Messiah's own blood.

<sup>16</sup>For where *there is* a will, *it is* a necessity *for* the death of the one who made the will to be established.

The author begins by speaking of a "*will*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, covenant, testament). He notes that if the "*will*" is to be "*established*" (ANAGKE - must needs, distress, necessity imposed by circumstances), the person who made it needs to pass through "*death*" (THANATOS - death, deadly). In other words, a will can not be enforced unless the person who wrote the will has died. This is a reference to the New Covenant that can be established because Christ has died and his blood has been shed. It would have been impossible to have the perfect covenant that we presently have if Christ had not died on the cross.

<sup>17</sup> For a will *is* in force concerning those who are dead, since *it is* never in force when the one who made the will is alive.

The author makes it plain as day and restructures his thoughts so that there will be NO MISUNDERSTANDING. The "*will*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, covenant, testament) is in "*force*" (BEBAIOS - to stabilize, confirm, establish) concerning those who are "*dead*" (NEKROS - dead, literally or figuratively). It is the same thing today. You cannot enforce a testament if the person is still alive. You do not receive your inheritance unless the one who has made a provision for you in his will has "passed away". The author stresses this point by again mentioning that a will is NEVER "*in force*" (ISCHUO - to have strength, force, be able) as long as the one who made the will is "*alive*" (ZAO - to live, lifetime). In other words, as long as Jesus was alive, as long as his blood was not shed on the cross the New Covenant could not be enforced.

<sup>18</sup> Therefore not even the first *covenant* was ratified without blood.

To prove his point, the author turns to the Old Covenant and how it was ratified. He writes "*therefore*" (HOTHEN - from thence, whereby, where upon) NOT EVEN the first covenant (the Mosaic Covenant) was "*ratified*" (EGKAINIZO - consecrated, dedicated) without "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of men or animals). This is a general statement. Not only did the Old Covenant come into effect with the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrificed animal, but so many things were purified by the blood. You can see this in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

<sup>19</sup> For *when* every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, *he* took the blood of calves with water and scarlet wool and hyssop *and* sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people,

The author brings his readers back to when the covenant was ratified. He speaks about when every "*commandment*" (ENTOLE - injunction, command, precept) had been "*spoken*" (LALEO - to talk, utter words, say) by Moses to ALL the people. The commands from the Lord God were for everybody to follow, not just the "religious" people or the Levites, priests, or high priest. Once Moses had given to the people what the Lord had commanded, he "*took*" (LAMBANO - to take, seize, get hold of) the blood of "*calves*" (MOSCHOS - a young bullock, calf) with water and "*scarlet*" (KOKKINOS - crimson color)

wool and "*hyssop*" (HUSSOPOS - a plant used by the Hebrews in their ritual sprinkling). What was done with the mixture of blood and water in which wool and hyssop were dipped was that the mixture was "*sprinkled*" (RHANTIZO - asperse, sprinkle) on BOTH the "*scroll*" (BIBLION - a roll, scroll, book) and the people. It was the blood that UNITED the Law (or covenant) of God and his people. Without the sprinkling of the blood on both people and the written covenant, there IS NO COVENANT.

<sup>20</sup> saying,

"This *is* the blood of the covenant that God has commanded for you."

To confirm what he had just written, the author legitimizes it by referring to when this was recorded in the Old Testament. This is the "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of man or animals) of the "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, contract, covenant) that "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer) has "*commanded*" (ENTELLOMAI - to enjoin, charge) for you. The first (as well as the second) covenant came from God to man; it is NEVER man to God. Here is the event that the author is referring to:

#### Exodus 24

5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

6 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."

8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

(NKJV)

Then the writer speaks of what Moses did.

<sup>21</sup> And likewise he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the utensils of service with the blood.

Once more, we see how central blood is in reference to the covenant of purifying not only people but also the instruments for the service of God. Moses took the blood and

water in which the wool and hyssop were soaked, he then "sprinkled" (RHANTIZO - asperse, sprinkle) ALL of the "utensils" (SKEUOS - a vessel, implement, apparatus) of "service" (LEITOURGIA - public function as a priest, service) with the blood. Notice that everything that was used for the service of the Lord had to be sprinkled with the blood. It was the blood that purified and made clean both the utensils and the priest who were at the service of the Lord God. NO ONE was purified without being cleansed by the blood and, by doing this, they were prepared to serve the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, nearly everything is purified with blood according to the law, and apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The shedding of the blood of an animal in the Old Covenant was a "type" of things to come. It represented the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross and his blood being shed. Animal blood TEMPORARILY cleanses people of their sins, but Christ's blood PERMANENTLY cleanses the repentant sinner. We have already seen this, and the author will, once again, speak of this in the following chapter. This verse is important to understand. For it teaches us that "*apart*" (CHORIS - separately or apart from, without, besides) from the "*shedding of blood*" (HAIMATEKCHUSIA - an effusion of blood) there is "*NO*" (OU - an absolute negative, never, no, none) "*forgiveness*" (APHESIS - freedom, pardon, deliverance, release from bondage or imprisonment). Nothing else will do, whatever it may be.

## 26 - *The greatness of Christ's sacrifice*

Hebrews 9:23-28

<sup>23</sup>Therefore *it was necessary for* the sketches of the *things* in heaven to be purified with these *sacrifices*, but the heavenly *things* themselves *to be purified* with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup>For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a *mere* copy of the true *one*, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf, <sup>25</sup>and not in order that he can offer himself many times, as the high priest enters into the sanctuary *year by year* with blood not his own, <sup>26</sup>since it would have been necessary for him to suffer many times from the foundation of the world, but now he has appeared once at the end of the ages for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup>And *just as* it is destined for people to die once, and after this, judgment, <sup>28</sup>thus also Christ, having been offered once in order to bear the sins of many, will appear for the second time without reference to sin to those who eagerly await him for salvation.

(LEB)

In our last section, the author spoke concerning the importance of blood in the establishment of the Mosaic covenant. We must remember that this was done here on earth, with faulty men and animal sacrifices. In our present section, we will see that the Messiah did not enter the man-made sanctuary but the heavenly one, granting believers a far greater benefit.

<sup>23</sup>Therefore *it was necessary for* the sketches of the *things* in heaven to be purified with these *sacrifices*, but the heavenly *things* themselves *to be purified* with better sacrifices than these.

It is important for us to understand why there was an earthly sanctuary made by human hands. This is what the author will teach his readers. It was "*necessary*" (ANAGKE - distress, must needs, needful) for this to be done because of the "*sketches*" (HUPODEIGMA - imitation, example, pattern) of the things in "*heaven*" (OURANOS - the sky, heaven). The word "sketches" that is used may not have been the best one for us

to understand. It would have been more helpful if the words "example" or "pattern" had been used. You see, the earthly sanctuary is a reflection (at most a pale one) of the heavenly sanctuary. It was given so that people could see and come to a better spiritual understanding.

It is written that the earthly "sketches" had to be "*purified*" (KATHARIZO - to cleanse, make clean, purify) with these "*sacrifices*" (THUSIA - sacrifice, a victim). He is referring to our past studies, which mentioned goats, calves, and heifers as sacrifices.

v.23 ... but the heavenly *things* themselves *to be purified* with better sacrifices than these.

The earthly sanctuary represented the heavenly one, but there are immense differences between them. One, and probably the most important, is that the heavenly sanctuary needed to be "*purified*" (KATHARIZO - to cleanse, make clean, purify) with "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, nobler) sacrifices than these. The heavenly sanctuary needed a better sacrifice, and that is where the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29,36) comes in.

<sup>24</sup>For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a *mere* copy of the true *one*, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf,

Contrary to the Levitical priesthood where the high priest would enter the "*sanctuary*" (HAGION - a sacred thing or place, holiest of all) which was "*made by hands*" (CHEIROPOIETOS - of human construction) and was a "*mere copy*" (ANTITUPON - antitype, counterpart) of the "*true one*", which is the heavenly sanctuary. "*Christ*" (CHRISTOS - anointed, the Messiah) "*entered*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in, go in) "*now*" (NUN - present time, now) in the "*presence*" (PROSOPON - the front, presence) of God in OUR behalf.

In other words, Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary and entered the presence of God the Father on OUR behalf. It was for the redeemed that he presented himself as our high priest to intercede for us.

<sup>25</sup> and not in order that he can offer himself many times, as the high priest enters into the sanctuary *year by year* with blood not his own,

This verse is crucial to understand, for there are those who say they are Christians and teach that Jesus Christ is offered over and over again for our sins each time a mass is performed. THIS IS NOT TRUE! The Bible clearly says that Jesus entered the celestial sanctuary NOT in order to "offer" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, lead to, put to) himself "*many times*" (POLLAKIS - many times, frequently). The Levitical high priest "enters" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in, go in) into the sanctuary year by year. He enters with "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of men or animals) but NOT HIS OWN. He enters the human sanctuary with the blood of the sacrificed animal.

<sup>26</sup> since it would have been necessary for him to suffer many times from the foundation of the world, but now he has appeared once at the end of the ages for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself.

It is NOT SO with Christ, and the author explains why. "*Since*" (EPEI - thereupon, for that, because) it would have been necessary for him (Jesus) to "*suffer*" (PASCHO - painful, suffer, vex) "*many times*" (POLLAKIS - many times, frequently) from the "*foundation*" (KATABOLE - a deposition, conceive, foundation) of the world. The author is saying that Christ suffered once - not many times as some religions teach. He writes that Christ has "*appeared*" (PHANEROO - to render apparent, appear, manifest) "*once*" (HAPAX - one, single time, once) at the end of the "*ages*" (AION - an age, world). Here we see that Christ introduced the end of an age (Old Covenant) and introduced a new one (New Covenant). He sacrificed himself, once and for all, for the "*removal*" (ATHETESIS - cancellation, put away, disannulling) of "*sin*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offence). How did Jesus do this? It was through the "*sacrifice*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice) of himself. Through his atoning death on the cross, the author will explain this further in the tenth chapter.

<sup>27</sup> And *just as* it is destined for people to die once, and after this, judgment,

This is one of the most famous verses of the epistle to the Hebrews. Again, it destroys many religions and philosophies, mostly found in India and Asia. It pulverizes the teachings of reincarnation. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the writer states that

it is "*destined*" (APOKEIMAI - to be reserved, laid up) for "*people*" (that's you and me and the billions of other people on earth) to "*die*" (APOTHNESKO - to die off, be dead) "ONCE" (HAPAX - one single time, once) and after this, "*judgment*" (KRISIS - decision, a tribunal, condemnation). Man does not reincarnate time after time. When he dies, only a judgment awaits. That is why we desperately need to repent of our sins and ask Jesus to save us from the coming judgment. Have you done this?

<sup>28</sup> thus also Christ, having been offered once in order to bear the sins of many, will appear for the second time without reference to sin to those who eagerly await him for salvation.

Just as men die just ONCE, so also Christ has "*offered*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, present unto) himself "ONCE" (HAPAX - a single time, once) in order to "*bear*" (ANAPHERO - to take up, bear, carry) the sins of many. Have you noticed that he bore the sins of many rather than all? Another truth is found here, that salvation is not universal. It is not given automatically to everyone, but only to those who call upon the name of Christ to be saved.

#### Acts 16

28 But Paul said in a loud voice, Do yourself no damage, for we are all here.

29 And he sent for lights and came rushing in and, shaking with fear, went down on his face before Paul and Silas,

30 And took them out and said, Sirs, what have I to do to get salvation?

31 And they said, Have faith in the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will have salvation.

(BBE)

The author ends this section looking into the future.

will appear for the second time without reference to sin to those who eagerly await him for salvation.

Jesus will "*appear*" (OPTANOMAI - to gaze, appear, look, see) a second time. Here the author is referring to his "*second*" (DEUTEROS - second in time, place or rank) coming.

He is coming back for those who eagerly "*await*" (APEKDECHOMAI - to expect fully) him for "*salvation*" (SOTERIA - rescue, safety, salvation).

Jesus died once and for all. His sacrifice was perfect and he now stands before the Father for the believer's benefit. Jesus does not forget his own and one day will return for them.

## 27 - *Animal sacrifices are insufficient*

Hebrews 10:1-4

<sup>1</sup> For the law, possessing a shadow of the good *things* that are about to come, not the form of things itself, *is never able year by year* by means of the same sacrifices which they offer without interruption to make perfect those who draw near. <sup>2</sup> For otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the ones who worship, having been purified once and for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup> But in them *there is* a reminder of sins *year by year*. <sup>4</sup> For *it is impossible for* the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

(LEB)

In this section, the author will use our conscience as another proof that the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant never actually did away with the problem of sin.

<sup>1</sup> For the law, possessing a shadow of the good *things* that are about to come, not the form of things itself, *is never able year by year* by means of the same sacrifices which they offer without interruption to make perfect those who draw near.

For the "*law*" (NOMOS - law, regulation, principle), this is the law given by the Lord God to his people through Moses. It would govern the spiritual, moral, and civil aspects of the lives of those whom he had made his people. In fact, there are 613 different laws which hold authority and anyone who breaks them is as though he broke them all, as James tells us.

James 2

10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

(RSV)

Here the author tells us that the law is a "*shadow*" (SKIA - shade, shadow, an outline) of the "*good things*" (AGATHOS - benefit, good, well) that are about "*to come*" (MELLO - to intend, be about to be) and not the "*form*" (EIKON - a likeness, representation,

image) and NOT the things "*itself*" (AUTOS - the same). In other words, the law represented the good things to come, but it was NOT that good thing by itself. The law NEVER brings freedom, but only condemnation.

### Galatians 3

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),  
(NKJV)

The author continues by writing what the law is never able to do.

v.1 ...*is* never able *year by year* by means of the same sacrifices which they offer without interruption to make perfect those who draw near.

All the different laws concerning the Levitical priesthood and all the different sacrifices that they performed in their ministry towards the Lord God could "*never*" (OUDEPOTE - not even at any time, never at all) "*make perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, finish, make perfect) the people who draw near. Even if these sacrifices were offered "*without interruption*" (DIENEKES - carried through, continually) year after year. The sacrifices under the Old Covenant were an image of what was to come - the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ the Messiah. Because the Old Testament sacrifices were imperfect, they naturally could not make perfect those who offered them.

<sup>2</sup>For otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the ones who worship, having been purified once and for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?

If these sacrifices would have cleansed the people once and for all would they not have "*ceased*" (PAUO - pause, to stop, come to an end) to be "*offered*" (PROSPHERO - to

bear, to lead to, present)? Of course they would have! Because people would have been "*purified*" (KATHAIRO - to cleanse, expiate, purge) once and for all. Having been thoroughly purified, they would "*no longer*" (ETI - any longer, anymore) have any "*consciousness*" (SUNEIDESIS - co-perception, moral consciousness) of sin. But they did and they had to come over and over again because their conscience bothered them day after day.

<sup>3</sup>But in them *there is* a reminder of sins *year by year*.

This is a very revealing verse. It tells us that "*in them*", in all the sacrifices and laws that concern them, was a "*reminder*" of "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offense). Instead of being refreshed in our soul, these animal sacrifices just reminded you of how sinful you were! Quite a contrast with the sacrifice of Christ, which gives peace and rest to the true believer.

#### Matthew 11

28 Come to me, all you who are troubled and weighted down with care, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke on you and become like me, for I am gentle and without pride, and you will have rest for your souls;

30 For my yoke is good, and the weight I take up is not hard.

(BBE)

#### John 7

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

(NKJV)

If you still have any doubt that animal sacrifices were only the image of the good things to come, our last verse will definitely change your mind.

<sup>4</sup>For *it is impossible for* the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The writer is very clear concerning the sacrifices of animals. He writes that it is "*impossible*" (ADUNATOS - unable, weak, impossible) for the "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of men or animals) of "*bulls*" (TAUROS - a bullock, bull, ox) and "*goats*" (TRAGOS - a he-goat, a goat) to "*take away*" (APHAIREO - to remove, cut off, take away) "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offence). The author is saying that there is only ONE sacrifice that takes away sins, and that is of the Messiah nailed to the cross. Because of his perfect sacrifice, the apostle Paul tells the believers two very important things in his letter to the Romans. The first is that we now have true peace with God:

Romans 5

1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
(RSV)

The second is that there is no longer any condemnation for the repentant believer:

Romans 8

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
(RSV)

May all true believers be eternally grateful for what Christ has done on their behalf!

## 28 - *Christ's sacrifice fulfills God's plan*

Hebrews 10:5-9

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, *when he* came into the world, he said,  
“Sacrifice and offering you did not want,  
but a body you prepared for me;  
<sup>6</sup>you did not delight in whole burnt offerings and *offerings* for sins.  
<sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—  
in the roll of the book it is written about me—  
to do your will, O God.’  
<sup>8</sup> *When he* says above,  
“Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *offerings* for sin  
you did not want, nor did you delight in,”  
which are offered according to the law, <sup>9</sup> then he has said,  
“Behold, I have come to do your will.”  
He takes away the first in order to establish the second,  
(LEB)

In our last section, we have been taught that all the sacrifices performed under the Mosaic law in relation to the service of the Lord were insufficient. No animal sacrifice actually does away with the problem of sin. In our present section, we will see God's solution to this problem.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, *when he* came into the world, he said,  
“Sacrifice and offering you did not want,  
but a body you prepared for me;

The word "*therefore*" (DIO - consequently, therefore, wherefore) manifests a logical continuance and conclusion to the problem of animal sacrifices. The answer to the insufficiency of animal sacrifices is "*HE*". The HE mentioned is Jesus Christ, who would become the perfect sacrifice for the permanent forgiveness of sins, as Paul teaches in the following verses:

Romans 3

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed  
by the Law and the Prophets,  
22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who  
believe. For there is no difference;  
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,  
25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate  
His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were  
previously committed,  
26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the  
justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

(NKJV)

So Jesus "*came*" (EISERCHOMAI - to enter, come in, go in) into the world. This speaks of his incarnation through Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 1:18). He came into this world because he was not of this world!

v.5 ... , he said,  
"Sacrifice and offering you did not want,  
but a body you prepared for me;

Here the author explains why God - the Son came into this world. It was because the "*sacrifice*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice) and the "*offering*" (PROSPHORA - presentations, oblation, offering) "you", that is God the Father, "*did not want*" (THELO - a determination, choose, desire). In reality and as we have seen, all of these sacrifices never measured up to the perfection that was required. So God stepped in and "*prepared*" (KATARTIZO - to complete, repair, prepare) a "*body*" (SOMA - the body as a whole) for me (the Son). We can actually read what the Son told the Father!

<sup>6</sup>you did not delight in whole burnt offerings and *offerings* for sins.

This verse is taken from Ps. 40.6 where we are told that the Father DID NOT "*delight*" (EUDOKEO - to think well of, approve, to be pleased in) in "*burnt offerings*" (HOLOKAUTOMA - whole burnt offering) and "*offerings*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice). Whether

it was a burnt offering or any other type of sacrifice. The Father actually DID NOT have any delight in these. If he would have, then the Son would not have to become that perfect sacrifice to atone for sins.

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—  
in the roll of the book it is written about me—  
to do your will, O God.'

This is taken from Ps.40.7. The Son said to the Father, "*I have come*" (HEKO - to arrive, be present, come). Here we see that the atoning work of Jesus Christ was willingly done. He freely came and gave his life. He did this because it had all been prophesized as we see in the phrase "*in the roll of the book it is written.*" This refers to the Holy Scriptures that the Jewish people had in their possession. These Scriptures were "*written*" (GRAPHO - to grave, write) about me (Jesus, the Messiah). Jesus says that he has come "*to do*" (POIEO - to make or do) the "*will*" (THELEMA - a determination, a choice, volition) of the Father. We see that the Son was submissive to the will of the Father, even unto death:

Luke 22

42 "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."  
(RSV)

Verse eight is a repetition of verses five and six,

<sup>8</sup> *When he says above,*  
"Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *offerings* for sin  
you did not want, nor did you delight in,"  
which are offered according to the law,

Except for the last phrase: Which are "*offered*" (PROSPHORA - presentation, oblation, offering) according to the "*law*" (NOMOS - law, regulation, principle). We are reminded that these offerings were made according to the law of God. What I would like you to note is that even if man does everything according to the law given by the Lord God, IT DOES NOT SUFFICE. It is not sufficient because both men and the offerings are marred

by sin. That is why Christ had to be sinless so that his sacrifice would bring delight to the Father and consequently bring atonement.

<sup>9</sup> then he has said,

“Behold, I have come to do your will.”

This repetition is taken from Ps. 40:8. Christ made the decision to come to the aid of the fallen race of Adam and do the will of the Father. He did this by becoming the perfect sacrifice that would please the Father and abolish the enmity that existed.

#### Ephesians 2

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

(NKJV)

Our last verse is extremely important to understand.

v.9 ...He takes away the first in order to establish the second,

Here we see that because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was accepted, God "*takes away*" (ANAIREO - to take up, take away, to do away with, abolish) the first order. This speaks of the Old Testament rules and regulations concerning all that had to do with animal sacrifice for the atonement of sins. This was abolished because, as we have seen, it was imperfect and not acceptable to the Lord God. When Christ came and sacrificed himself at the cross, this was well pleasing to the Father, and having done away with the first, he established a second order. In other words, the Father has done away with the Law and introduced justification through grace that is only found in Christ Jesus.

#### Romans 10

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who has faith.

(BBE)

Not only is there no further need for any type of animal sacrifices or different offerings, there is also no other need for any type of personal sacrifice to obtain the favor of the Lord God! Christ has done it all for the repentant believer. What does honor the Father is that we live by faith, as we see in the following verses.

Rom. 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

(NKJV)

Galatians 3

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

(NKJV)

May I ask if you are still under the sacrificial ordinances of the law concerning righteousness or are you under grace and living by believing that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to expiate all of your sins?

## 29 - *Christ's sacrifice renders perfect the believer*

Hebrews 10:10-18

<sup>10</sup> by which will we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices many times, which are never able to take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But this one, *after he* had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> from now on waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy. <sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

<sup>16</sup> "This *is* the covenant that I will decree for them after those days, says the Lord:

I am putting my laws on their hearts,  
and I will write them on their minds."

<sup>17</sup> *He also says,*

"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will never remember again."

<sup>18</sup> Now where *there is* forgiveness of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.  
(LEB)

In our last section, we saw that God the Son came to the rescue of sinners by offering himself as a perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. In our present section, we will probably study some of the most cherished verses we can find in this book and maybe the entire New Testament. Each time I read these verses, my heart bursts out in gratitude.

The last words of Jesus at the cross were:

John 19:30

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

(NKJV)

The work of redemption was completed, the sacrifice was offered. The High Priest, according to Melchizedek, had done his holy service to the Lord God. In this section, the author will explain the incredible benefits that trickle down from the bloodied cross of Christ. There are several main points that I would like to highlight.

<sup>10</sup> by which will we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The first is found in verse ten, It is by the "*will*" (THELEMA - a determination, purpose, volition) of the Almighty that redemption (in its different facets) is freely given to the repentant believer. God DID NOT have any obligation to do this-but he did. This is called grace, as Paul writes:

Ephesians 2

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God--  
(RSV)

My first highlight is that It is by the will of God that the true believers are made "*holy*" (HAGIAZO - to make holy, consecrate, be pure). It is almost impossible to imagine, but true believers have become holy, pure from sin in the eyes of the Lord God! This is through the "*offering*" (PROSPHORA - presentation, offering, oblation, sacrifice) of the "*body*" (SOMA - the body as a whole) of Jesus Christ. This offering was given at the cross where the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, was sacrificed. We see that he was victorious over sin because in the book of Revelations, chapter five, the Lamb, who is on the throne, is worshipped by all creation. What is crucial to understand is that Jesus Christ has made holy true believers and this act is done "*once for all*" (EPHAPAX - upon one occasion only, once and for all). Christ offered himself once, and this is sufficient to make holy all those who sincerely repent of their sins and ask him to save them from the judgment to come. There is NOTHING else to do. No one can add to the perfect work of Christ at the cross. Amen!

<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices many times, which are never able to take away sins.

My second highlight has already been pointed out by the author, but it seems to be so important that he mentions it again. The priests under the Old Covenant were "*serving*" (LEITOURGEO - a public servant, serving in the sacred rites as a priest or Levite) and "*offering*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, to offer up) the same sacrifices "*many times*" (POLLAKIS - many times, often, frequently). These sacrifices were "*never*" (OUDEPOTE - not even at any time, never, not at all) able to "*take away*" (PERIAIREO - remove all around, take away) sins. We have spoken about this. The animal sacrifices were only a dim reflection of the sacrifice of the coming Messiah. Remember that the author is dealing with Jewish people who have been taught all of their lives something that they now must set aside!

<sup>12</sup> But this one, *after he* had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God <sup>13</sup> from now on waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.

My third highlight speaks of where our High Priest presently is. The author repeats (as with a hammer hitting on the head of a nail to pound it in the wood) that Christ offered himself as a "*sacrifice*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice) for sins. There is ONE sacrifice and it is sufficient for "*all time*" (DIENEKES - perpetually, continually, forever). Where is Jesus, one might ask? The answer is that he is at the "*right hand*" (DEXIOS - the right side, right hand) of God the Father (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; 1Peter 3:22).

We also see one of the things that Jesus is doing at the right hand of the Father. He is "*waiting*" (EKDECHOMAI - to wait, expect, tarry) until his "*enemies*" (ECHTHRA - hateful, odious, enemy, foe) are made a "*footstool*" (POUS - a foot, a footstool) for his feet. This symbolically means that Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father and that, one day, all of those who are against him will be vanquished. One day, all knees will bow before him.

## Philippians 2

9 For this reason God has put him in the highest place and has given to him the name  
which is greater than every name;

10 So that at the name of Jesus every knee may be bent, of those in heaven and those  
on earth and those in the underworld,

11 And that every tongue may give witness that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.  
(BBE)

A fourth highlight is found in our next verse.

<sup>14</sup> For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.

Again, the author mentions "ONE" "*offering*" (PROSPHORA - an oblation, sacrifice). Not MANY offerings but just ONE offering. We have seen that it is perfect before the Father. Jesus has "*perfected*" (TELEIOO - to complete, to make perfect, to bring to the end or goal) the redeemed. Here we see that true believers are not only holy but also perfect in their standing before God. This perfect standing is for "*all times*" (DIENEKES - perpetually, continually, forever). Contrary to certain so-called Christian churches which teach that people have to constantly renew their state of holiness - by going through certain sacraments, the Bible is very clear - true believers have become holy and perfect for "all time". We are kept perfect because we have received Christ's righteousness.

#### 1 Corinthians 1

30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--  
(NKJV)

True believers can now rest knowing that they have been granted to be redeemed and made righteous before the Father for ALL TIME. It does not depend on the believer to "keep his righteousness." It depends on Christ's perfect sacrifice to do so.

<sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

<sup>16</sup> "This *is* the covenant that I will decree for them  
after those days, says the Lord:  
I am putting my laws on their hearts,  
and I will write them on their minds."

The fifth highlight concerns the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "*testifies*" (MARTUUREO - to be a witness, to give a testimony), he has a message for the disciples of Christ. This

message is about the new "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, contract, covenant) which was prophesized in Jer. 31:33. The Holy Spirit testifies that God the Father will "*decree*" (DIATITHEMAI - appoint, make, dispose) a new covenant. This new covenant will be different because instead of putting his laws on tablets, this time God will put his "*laws*" (NOMOS - law, regulations, principles) on their "*hearts*" (KARDIA - the thoughts and feelings of the mind) and in their "*minds*" (DIANOIA - deep thoughts, the mind, understanding, the faculty to understand). It is appropriate that this message be given by the Holy Spirit since it is the Holy Spirit who will bring to mind all these things, like Jesus said:

John 14

26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

(RSV)

The sixth highlight is the one which warms my heart the most.

<sup>17</sup> *He also says,*

"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will never remember again."

This is a quote taken from Jer. 31:34 and it is a promise from the Lord God. This promise is based on the perfect and eternal redemptive work of Christ. This promise IS NOT based on our participation. The Almighty promises that our "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offense) and also our "*lawless deeds*" (ANOMIA - illegality, violation of the law, wickedness) he will "*never*" (OU - a double negative, not at all) "*remember*" (MNAOMAI - to bear in mind, remember) "*again*" (ETI - ever, henceforth, any longer).

The Lord God does not lie, as we see in Num. 23:19. We can count on his promises. What he says will stand for ever. The true believer can rest because he knows that God has promised not only that he has become holy and pure but that God will NEVER bring his sins to mind. Simply because they have been atoned for by the Messiah's death on the cross. What an incredible comfort - all has been forever forgiven. Our past, present, and even future sins were all laid on the shoulders of Christ when he was our substitute on the cross. What a wonderful God we have!

The seventh highlight is found in our last verse.

<sup>18</sup> Now where *there is* forgiveness of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.

This verse brings everything to a natural conclusion. The author speaks of "*forgiveness*" (APHESIS - freedom, pardon, deliverance). This forgiveness is given by the Father because of what the Son has done on our behalf and is placed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Since there is forgiveness, the natural conclusion is that there is "*no longer*" (ETI - any further, any longer, any more) an "*offering*" (PROSPHORA - presentation, an oblation, sacrifice) for "*sin*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offense).

Just as a person who is declared not guilty by a judge has nothing to do to enjoy his guiltless state, so too does the repentant believer have no sacrifice, penance, or anything of the sort to do. He has been declared just, and there is no more offering for his sins. This also implies that Christ does not need to be crucified a second or third time in order to keep the believer holy and just. As Jesus said on the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30).

May all true believers rejoice in the full, perfect, and eternal redemption they have received because of the finished work of Christ. - Amen!

### *30 - A warning against wavering*

Hebrews 10:19-25

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, *since we* have confidence for the entrance into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>*by the* new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, his flesh, <sup>21</sup>and *since we have* a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us approach with a true heart in the full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast to the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for the one who promised *is* faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us think about *how to stir one another up to love* and good works, <sup>25</sup>not abandoning *our meeting together*, as *is* the habit of some, but encouraging *each other*, and by so much more as you see the day drawing near.

(LEB)

#### **We are entering Section three of the book of Hebrews: Final exhortations (10:19-13:25)**

We can say that this section is a natural conclusion to our previous one. Knowing that true believers have received total, perfect, and eternal redemption and that God has promised to never bring our sins back to mind, what should we do? This section answers this question.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, *since we* have confidence for the entrance into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,

The word "therefore" links these two sections. Together, they form a natural unity of thought. He calls them "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS - a brother near or remote. This can be taken as brothers in the faith or brothers in their nationality (Hebrews). Since this epistle is not written to a local church, I believe that the author of Hebrews is writing to a Jewish community which includes believers and non-believers. To those who truly believe, he writes that they have "*confidence*" (PARRHESIA - assurance, confidence, boldness) for the "*entrance*" (EISODOS - an entrance, come in, entering) into the

"sanctuary" (HAGION - a sacred thing, holy place, sanctuary). Naturally, the author is speaking of the heavenly sanctuary because only a Levitical high priest can enter an earthly one. We have this assurance that we can enter the heavenly sanctuary because of the "blood" (HAIMA - blood of men or animals) of Jesus. This has already been explained thoroughly.

<sup>20</sup> *by the new and living way which he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, his flesh,*

How do believers enter this heavenly sanctuary? It is by the "new" (PROSPHATOS - fresh, new, lately made) and "living" (ZAO - to live, lifetime) "way" (HODOS - a road, journey, way). Before it was through the dead sacrifices of animals, but now it is through the living way (which is Jesus himself). It is Jesus who "inaugurated" (EGKAINIZO - initiate, consecrate, dedicate) it for us. The "us" are the redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and no one else, since they have rejected or neglected to repent. This "new way" passes through the "curtain" (KATAPETASMA - something spread thoroughly, a veil). Remember that this curtain separated the holy from the holy of holies in the earthly sanctuary. But now we are told that this heavenly curtain is the Messiah's "flesh" (SARX, the flesh, meat of an animal). In other words, the curtain was his body. The apostle Paul explains it this way.

#### Ephesians 2

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

(NKJV)

In verse 19 it is written *since we have confidence* and now the author adds another "since".

<sup>21</sup> *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,*

This one speaks of having a "*great*" (MEGAS - big, great, mighty) "*priest*" (HIEREUS - a priest) who is "*over*" (EPI - superimposition, over, upon) the "*house*" (OIKOS - a dwelling, home, house, temple) of God. Therefore Jesus has opened the way to the heavenly sanctuary and he reigns, having been the resurrected Lamb of God. There are three things which the author tells his audience they should do. All three things are introduced by the phrase "Let us..."

<sup>22</sup> let us approach with a true heart in the full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

This is the first thing believers are told to do, they are to "*approach*" (PROSERCHOMAI - to approach, come near, come unto) God. They can do this because (1) they now have a "*true*" (ALETHINOS - truthful, true "*heart*" (KARDIA - the thoughts and feelings of the mind. (2) because they have "*full assurance*" (PLEROPHORIA - entire confidence, full assurance). (3) Their hearts are "*sprinkled*" (RHANTIZO - asperse, sprinkled) clean from an "*evil*" (PONEROS - hateful, evil, vicious, malice) "*conscience*" (SUNEIDESIS - co-perception, moral consciousness). Remember that "sprinkling" was part of the ceremonial service in the worship of God (see this in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). (4) Our "*bodies*" (SOMA - the body as a whole) "*washed*" (LOUO - to bathe, wash, cleanse) with "*pure*" (KATHAROS - clean, clear, pure) water. We can approach God because our heart, conscience, and body have been purified. We have become blameless before the Lord God (Col. 1:22; 1 Thes 5:23). All that hindered man from approaching the Father has been taken away by the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast to the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for the one who promised *is* faithful

This is the second thing true believers are told to do. The first is to approach God and the second is to "*hold fast*" (KATECHO - hold down, hold fast, retain). What is it that believers should now do? Here we see that we should hold tightly to the "*confession*" (HOMOLOGIA - confession, profession). This is the believer's confession when he confessed his faith in Jesus as his Messiah, as Paul writes:

Romans 10

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart;" that is, the word of faith, which we preach:

9 that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(WEB)

We are to hold tightly to the confession of our "*hope*" (ELPIS - confidence, faith, hope, expectation). Hold on to your faith, don't let go! Do this without "*wavering*" (AKLINES - not leaning, firm, unmoved). In other words, be strong, stand strong, don't let the enemy make you shiver or retreat.

v.23 ... for the one who promised *is* faithful

We are to remain strong because the one (God) who "*promised*" (EPAGGRILLO - to announce, to engage to do, promise) is "*faithful*" (PISTOS - sure, true, can be relied on). We can trust God. Has he not proven that he is trustworthy? Has Christ not died in our place and placed our sins on his shoulders? God always keeps his promises.

<sup>24</sup> And let us think about *how to stir one another up to love* and good works, <sup>25</sup> not abandoning *our meeting together*, as *is* the habit of some, but encouraging *each other*, and by so much more as you see the day drawing near.

This third "let us" has many aspects, but they are all under one heading—"take care of each other". We are told to "*think*" (KATANOEO - to observe fully, consider, behold). So the following are things that we should meditate upon or ponder. The first thing to think about is how to "*stir*" (PAROXUSMOS - excitement to good, provoke) one another to "*love*" (AGAPE - affection, benevolence, charity, love). We are to think about how we can manifest our love to the brethren in Christ. Is this not one of the main commands of our Lord?

John 13

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."  
(RSV)

Loving each other is not enough! As a disciple, we must be occupied with "*good*" (KALOS - beautiful, good, virtuous) "*works*" (ERGON - to work, toil, labor). These are works that the Lord has already prepared for us, as Paul explains.

#### Ephesians 2

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.  
(NKJV)

We continue to learn what it means to "take care" of each other in our last verse.

<sup>25</sup> not abandoning *our meeting together*, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *each other*, and by so much more as you see the day drawing near.

Believers are told they should not be "*abandoning*" (EGKATALEIPO - to leave behind, forsake, leave) their "*meeting together*" (EPISUNAGOGE - a complete collection, a meeting). How can we express our love, care, and concern for our brothers and sisters if we are not in their company? The author DOES NOT say that it has to be done by gathering ALL TOGETHER without exception. There are always people who are missing for one reason or another. What we are told to do is to be with other Christians for the service of God (praise, prayer, worship, teaching, etc..). This is the aim we should all be looking and striving for, being with other believers on the Lord's day. It seems that for some, it was a "*habit*" (ETHOS - custom, manner, habit) to not do this. We are not told why. Our modern days enable us to be caring for others in different ways when we cannot be physically with them. We can write, telephone, Email, text, or go on social media. I know some have bible lessons and prayer groups "on line". This can be a substitute in difficult situations, but never a permanent replacement!

We are told to "take care" of each other by "*encouraging*" (PARAKALEO - to call near, invite, exhort) each other. The author is speaking of "speaking the truth" to each other. Have a word of encouragement and support for those who are in need of it.

Acts 20

35 In all things I was an example to you of how, in your lives, you are to give help to the feeble, and keep in memory the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said,  
There is a greater blessing in giving than in getting.  
(BBE)

We need to ask ourselves: "Why should I be occupied in these things?" We are given the answer in the end of the verse.

v.25 ... and by so much more as you see the day drawing near.

Not only are believers called to do these things, but by "*so much*" (TOSOUTOS - so vast as this, this many) more. So there are many more things we ought to be occupied with as we "*see*" (BLEPO - behold, beware, perceive) the "*day*" (HEMERA - the time space between dawn and dark) "*drawing near*" (EGGIZO - to make near, be at hand). The day that the author is speaking of is certainly the day of the return of Jesus Christ. We must be occupied with the Lord's work until he returns. Remember what Jesus said when he was just a boy and his parents were looking for him in Jerusalem.

Luke 2

48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."  
49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"  
(NKJV)

May we not be like the ones who constantly waver in their walk with the Lord. May we also steadily do the Lord's work till he comes.

### *31 - A warning against wilful sin*

Hebrews 10:26-31

<sup>26</sup> For *if* we keep on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that is about to consume the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who rejected the law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> How much worse punishment do you think the person will be considered worthy of who treats with disdain the Son of God and who considers ordinary the blood of the covenant by which he was made holy and who insults the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know the one who said,  
“Vengeance *is* mine, I will repay,”  
and again,  
“The Lord will judge his people.”  
<sup>31</sup> *It is* a terrifying *thing* to fall into the hands of the living God.

As I have written before, this epistle is written for the Jewish people at large. Some of them were converted to Jesus as their Messiah, and some were not. Just as in our churches today, some are born again and some are not. We need to make this distinction. In this section, the writer of Hebrews warns those who have not yet received Christ as their long awaited Messiah.

If this is misunderstood, the modern-day reader will think that he can lose his salvation because everybody sins even AFTER their conversion. Remember what Paul wrote about himself.

#### Romans 7

17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.  
23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.  
24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?  
25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.  
(NKJV)

If we understand correctly, the author is writing to those who are wavering, who have not yet decided to receive Christ as their Savior. This section is written with THEM in mind.

<sup>26</sup> For *if* we keep on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

The "we" is generic and not pointing at the redeemed. If unbelievers keep on "*sinning*" (HAMARTANO - to miss the mark, to err, offend, sin) "*deliberately*" (EKLEGOMAI - to select, make a choice, choose out) after "*receiving*" (LAMBANO - to take, to seize, obtain) the "*knowledge*" (EPIGNOSIS - recognition, full discernment) of the "*truth*". (AKETHEIA - truth, true). In other words, if after hearing the gospel truth, that you are a sinner and that you must repent of your sins and call upon the name of Jesus to save you, if after being evangelized and having received this knowledge, you keep on sinning deliberately, which manifests that you have not responded to God's call to repent, the author writes the following. He writes that there "*no longer*" (ETI - hereafter, any longer, no more) "*remains*" (APOLEIPO - to leave behind, forsake, remain) a "*sacrifice*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice) for sins. There is NO forgiveness possible, simply because the person has REJECTED the only sacrifice (as we have seen) that can take away his sin and make him acceptable to God. This has not changed, it is the same today. Most of the people we have evangelized have not received Christ the first time we spoke to them. They remain dead in their sins UNTIL they repent and cry out to Christ for forgiveness.

## Colossians 2

13 And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

14 having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (RSV)

The story of the rich young man (Mat. 19:16-22) is a perfect example of someone rejecting the voice of the Lord Jesus to follow him, therefore remaining in his sins. One must remember what was written by the sacred author earlier in this chapter concerning the security that the High Priest gives to the believer and the promise that God has given to the repentant.

<sup>17</sup> *He also says,*

“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will never remember again.”

<sup>18</sup> Now where *there is* forgiveness of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.

Always remember that salvation is secured by what Christ has done on the cross and not what we can do. Salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8). We can never earn our salvation or strive to keep it.

<sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that is about to consume the adversaries.

This verse describes what awaits those who reject Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah. It is for those who place their confidence in the law of Moses (for the Jews) or have no law at all (Gentiles). This is what awaits all who reject Christ as their Savior. It is a "*fearful*" (PHOBEROS - frightful, fearful, terrible) "*expectation*" (EKDOCHE - expectation, a receiving from) this word is only used once in the New Testament. What are they expecting to receive from God? There are two things mentioned. The first is a "*judgment*" (KRISIS - a tribunal, condemnation, judgment) the second is a "*fury*" (ZELOS - fervent of mind, indignation) of "*fire*" (PUR - fire, fiery). In other words, the wrath of God will be their cup to drink. The lake of fire will become their eternal home (Rev. 19:20; 20:10-15). This will "*consume*" (ESTHIO - to eat, devour) the "*adversaries*" (HUPENANTIOS - opposed, adversary, against) of the Living God. Amen that those who have placed their faith in Christ Jesus have become children by adoption (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5) and are no longer adversaries.

In the following verses, the author begins to explain why there is such a judgment on those who reject Christ. He naturally refers back to the Old Testament, which his readers know very well.

<sup>28</sup> Anyone who rejected the law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*.

He begins by giving the example of the law of Moses by saying that anyone who "*rejected*" (ATHETEO - to set aside, cast off, reject) the "*law*" (NOMOS - law, regulations, principles) of Moses "*dies*" (APOTHNESKO - to die off, de dead, die). In the Old Testament, if you break certain aspects of the law of Moses, the consequences would be death (Ex. 19:12; 21:12,15,16,17, etc..). The writer says that no "*mercy*" (OIKTIRMOS - pity, mercy, compassion) was given on the "*testimony*" (MARTURIA - evidence given, testimony, witness) of two or three witnesses, as we see in the following verses:

#### Deuteronomy 17

6 On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

7 The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from the midst of you.  
(RSV)

He then compares the punishment for breaking the law with the rejection of the Messiah.

<sup>29</sup> How much worse punishment do you think the person will be considered worthy of who treats with disdain the Son of God and who considers ordinary the blood of the covenant by which he was made holy and who insults the Spirit of grace?

His argument goes as follows: "*How much*" (POSOS - how much, how great, how many) "*worse*" (CHEIRON - more evil, aggravated, worse, severe) do you "*think*" (DOKEO - suppose, to think) the "*punishment*" (TIMORIA - vindication, penalty, punishment) will the person receive when they "*disdain*" (KATAPATEO - to trample down, treat with rudeness, to spurn) the Son of God? What will be their punishment if men "*consider*"

(DOKEO - suppose, to think) "*ordinary*" (KOINOS - ceremonially profane, defiled, unholy) the blood of the "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, a contract, a testament). The covenant that is mentioned here is the new covenant that has been ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ. By accounting this new covenant "*ordinary*" (KOINOS - defiled, unholy) you are "*insulting*" (ENUBRIZO - to insult, to despise) the Spirit (Holy Spirit) of "*grace*" (CHARIS - benefit, favor, gift). In other words, if you think that breaking the law in the Old Testament was something you should not have done because the penalty was death, imagine what happens when you disdain the Son of God, you consider unholy the New Covenant, and you insult the Holy Spirit! These are the things that can make you "*holy*" (HAGIAZO - to make holy, purify, consecrate) yet you despise them. How great the punishment will be!

<sup>30</sup> For we know the one who said,  
 "Vengeance *is* mine, I will repay,"  
 and again,  
 "The Lord will judge his people."

The author reminds his readers what was written in the Old Testament. When the author writes "*we know*" (EIDO - to see, to know, be aware of), this includes the people that are reading. It means I know and you know the one who "*said*" (EPO - to speak or say, command). We also know who said the following, it is the Lord God. This verse is to impress on the hearts of those non-believing Jews that this rejection of the Messiah is extremely serious because the person behind these words is the Almighty and this is what God said, "*vengeance*" (EKDIKESIS - vindication, retribution, punishment) is mine; I will "*repay*" (ANTAPODIDOMI - to requite, render, repay). This is a quote from Deut. 32:35. God promises to repay those who trample the precious blood of the Messiah, which introduces the New Testament into effect. To add even more weight, he adds yet another severe warning: The "*Lord*" (KURIOS - supreme in authority) will "*judge*" (KRINO - to distinguish, decide, punish) his people. This is taken from Deut. 32:36.

You may now have a greater understanding of why the author repeats three times, "Do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7). Don't harden your hearts because the outcome is a terrible judgment that will fall upon you - forever!

<sup>31</sup> *It is a terrifying thing* to fall into the hands of the living God.

The author ends this section with these words. As if it were yet another plea for undecided Hebrew readers. You need to stop refusing the New Covenant sealed by the blood of the Lamb of God. You need to repent and stop hardening your hearts, and this is why. It is a "*terrible*" (PHOBEROS - frightful, formidable, terrible) thing to "*fall into*" (EMPIPTO - to fall on, to be entrapped by) the hands of the "*living*" (ZAO - to live, lively) "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer). Who is able to overcome the Lord God? Who can tell him to put an end to his judgment? Have we forgotten that we are but a handful of dust and a vapor that exists but for a short time!

#### James 4

14b What is your life? It is a mist, which is seen for a little time and then is gone.

(BBE)

If it is not already done, may you heed the call of God to repent of your sins and come to the cross of Christ for repentance.

## 32 - Remember your salvation

Hebrews 10:32-39

<sup>32</sup> But remember the former days in which, *after you* were enlightened, you endured a great struggle with sufferings, <sup>33</sup> sometimes being publicly exposed both to insults and to afflictions, and sometimes becoming sharers with those who were treated in this way. <sup>34</sup> For you both sympathized with the prisoners and put up with the seizure of your belongings with joy *because you* knew that you yourselves had a better and permanent possession. <sup>35</sup> Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, in order that *after you* have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. <sup>37</sup> For yet

“a very, very little *while*,  
*and* the one who is coming will come and will not delay.

<sup>38</sup> But my righteous one will live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back, my soul is not well pleased with him.”

<sup>39</sup> But we are not among those who shrink back to destruction, but among those who have faith to the preservation of *our* souls.

(LEB)

Because of their faith, his Hebrew readers were going through great difficulties because of the persecution they received. It may have come from Roman authorities, but let us not forget that Jewish believers in the Messiah were also persecuted by their own countrymen who had widely rejected Jesus the Nazarene.

<sup>32</sup> But remember the former days in which, *after you* were enlightened, you endured a great struggle with sufferings,

The author describes what these Hebrew believers were going through. But before doing this, he brings them back to the "*former*" (PROTERON - previously, before, former) days. When we go through the furnace of life, we also need to remember the first days of our faith—when we met Christ and our hearts were changed. The author calls these former days the days "*after you were enlightened*" (PHOTIZO - to shine, enlightened, make to see). This is the day of our salvation, when we passed from death

to life (John 3:14) and were transported into the kingdom of the beloved Son like we see in the following verse:

Colossians 1

12 Giving praise to the Father who has given us a part in the heritage of the saints in light;

13 Who has made us free from the power of evil and given us a place in the kingdom of the Son of his love;

14 In whom we have our salvation, the forgiveness of sins:  
(BBE)

So what happened after they were "enlightened"?

v.32 ... you endured a great struggle with sufferings,

First of all, they "*endured*" (HUPOMENO - to stay under, bear, endure, suffer) a "*great*" (POLUS - much, largely, abundant, great) "*struggle*" (ATHLESIS - a struggle, a fight, a contest). Now this great struggle, this animosity towards them, brought "*sufferings*" (PATHEMA - hardship, pain, affliction). It was not easy to live a life as a Christ follower. You were despised by the Roman authorities because your king was Jesus and not Caesar and you would not bow down before him. You also suffered from the Jewish religious leaders who dictated the social and spiritual life of the Jewish population. You were shunned on both sides, and you suffered!

<sup>33</sup> sometimes being publicly exposed both to insults and to afflictions, and sometimes becoming sharers with those who were treated in this way.

The author continues to paint a picture of how they suffered because of the name of Christ. They were also "*publicly exposed*" (THEATRIZO - to expose as a spectacle). In other words, these authorities delighted in making a public spectacle out of the true believers. What did they do to them? They received "*insults*" (ONEIDISMOS - reproach, reviling, insults aimed to damage a reputation). It did not take long before people had a very bad image of you in their minds. They have fed and infected people with damaging lies concerning you. The author also writes that they suffered "*afflictions*" (THLIPSIS - afflicted, persecution, trouble). It must have been very difficult for the

followers of Christ to find peace. This is probably one of the reasons why they were exhorted not to abandon their assembling together.

V.33 ... and sometimes becoming sharers with those who were treated in this way.

We can also see that even though they might not have yet personally gone through such difficult times, they sometimes became "*sharers*" (KOINONOS - to share, associate, partaker) with those who were "*treated*" (ANASTREPHO - remain, be used, abide) this way. It seems that one way or another, directly or indirectly, you suffered because of your love for Christ. Things have not changed for today across the world true believers in Christ are still persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and executed simply because of their faith.

<sup>34</sup> For you both sympathized with the prisoners and put up with the seizure of your belongings with joy *because you* knew that you yourselves had a better and permanent possession

These believers in Christ truly loved one another, as Christ had taught his disciples to do (John 13:34; 15:12,17). They "*sympathized*" (SUMPATHEO - to feel sympathy with, to have compassion) with the "*prisoners*" (DESMON - shackle, bond, chain). They had at heart the fate of people who were imprisoned because of their faith. They surely placed them in their prayers, maybe even took the risk of visiting them and bringing them sustenance. They also had their own problems. Some were not imprisoned but had to "*put up*" (PROSDECHOMAI - to admit, accept, allow) with the "*seizure*" (HARPAGE - pillage, extortion, ravaging) of their belongings. It may have been the Roman soldiers who took advantage of their authority and stole from Christians, knowing that they would not denounce them for fear of being imprisoned.

The author describes their attitude towards all of this. They did not allow hatred to fill their hearts. Quite the contrary. It is written that they allowed themselves to be abused with "*joy*" (CHARA - cheerfulness, calm delight, gladness). One might ask how can this be possible? The answer is that they "*knew*" (GINOSKO - to know, be aware of, perceive) that they had a "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, nobler) and "*permanent*" (MENO - to stay, abide, dwell) "*possession*" (HUPARXIS - property, wealth, goods). Their eyes were fixed on their final reward—heaven. They knew that the Lord

God would keep his promise and that they would be with him for all time. They did not cling to what was temporary, knowing what was in store for them in eternity. How I wish that all true believers had such an attitude!

<sup>35</sup>Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward.

The author encourages them to persevere in their faith. He encourages them by writing, do not "*throw away*" (APOBALLO - to throw off, cast away) your "*confidence*" (PARRHESIA - assurance, boldness, frankness). In other words, keep the faith and don't abandon your calling. The apostle Paul wrote it this way concerning his own life:

2 Timothy 4

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

(NKJV)

The reason why they ought to keep the faith no matter what, is that there is a "*great*" (MEGAS - big, exceedingly, great) "*reward*" (MISTHAPODOSIA - requital, reward) that the Lord will give you. The apostle Peter also encouraged believers in the same manner.

1 Peter 1

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy became our father again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that doesn't fade away, reserved in Heaven for you,

5 who by the power of God are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(WEB)

The author tells them why they should not throw away their confidence.

<sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, in order that *after you* have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

They "*need*" (CHREIA - demand, request, need, necessity) "*endurance*" (HUPOMONE - cheerful endurance, constancy). Notice that they needed to endure with cheerfulness! Not with hate, disdain, or scorn harbored in their hearts. They needed to be like Christ, who placed everything in the hands of his Father and also say, "Not my will be done but yours" (Luke 22:42). They needed to endure in order to do the "*will*" (THELEMA - a determination, choice, desire) of God in order to "*receive*" (KOMIZO - to carry off, bring, receive) what was "*promised*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, divine assurance). In other words, the author is encouraging the believers to persevere in order to FULLY receive what was promised to them.

<sup>37</sup> For yet

“a very, very little *while*,  
*and* the one who is coming will come and will not delay.

In verse thirty-seven, the author reminds his readers that their sufferings will come to an end. Their hope, and that of all true Christians, is that in a "*little while*" (MIKROS - small in size, quantity or time), the "one", who is the Lord Jesus Christ, will come and will not "*delay*" (CHRONIZO - to take time, linger, delay). The plan is set and when the time comes, the Son will come back. This was their hope and this is still the hope of every disciple of Christ. We may think that he is tarrying, but we need to be reminded of what Peter wrote:

2 Peter 3

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

(NKJV)

In verse thirty-eight, the author now turns back to his readers and brings them this severe warning. It seems that some had become what I call "closet Christians," hiding their true identity.

<sup>38</sup> But my righteous one will live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back, my soul is not well pleased with him."

He refers back to a quote from Habakkuk 2:3,4 which speaks of the just living by faith. We can see that this verse does not apply to the "one" in the previous verse since it spoke concerning the Messiah. In the New Testament, the phrase "the just shall live by faith" is repeated three times (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38) and they all refer to the believer.

This is what the Lord has to say concerning the believer. If he "*shrinks back*" (HUPOSTOLE - apostasy, to draw-back, to retreat) my soul is "NOT well pleased" (EUDOKEO - to think well of, approve, to be well pleased). The Lord God does not approve of a person of faith who abandons his faith because of the circumstances in which he or she is living. This reminds me of what Paul wrote to Timothy concerning two men who had done this.

#### 1 Timothy 1

18 This charge I commit to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophetic utterances which pointed to you, that inspired by them you may wage the good warfare,

19 holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith,

20 among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

(RSV)

These men suffered the wrath of God. He took his protective hand from the enemy that was upon them. They had now become easy prey for the roaring lion who is searching to devour them (1 Peter 5:8). May all true believers be very cautious, for we cannot mock God (Gal. 6:7).

<sup>39</sup> But we are not among those who shrink back to destruction, but among those who have faith to the preservation of *our* souls.

The author reminds his readers which "camp" they belong to. We, the true and steadfast believers, we ARE NOT among those who "*shrink back*" (HUPOSTOLE - apostasy, draw back) to "*destruction*" (APOLEIA - perniciousness, ruin, loss, damnable). In other words, we are not like so called believers who renounce their faith because they are afraid of the consequences. Christ was true to us until the very end and so shall we be unto him - true to the very end. He reminds them that those who "shrink back" will taste the wrath of God one way or another. His hand will remain heavy upon them. As it was in different circumstances in the Old Testament, God allowed the enemies of his people to have victory over them which brought terrible consequences.

v.30 ... but among those who have faith to the preservation of *our* souls.

We belong to the other "camp" among those who have "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction) to the "*preservation*" (PERIPOIESIS - acquisition, possession, saving) of our "*souls*" (PSUCHE - breath, spirit, soul). From this, we can understand the theology of the perseverance of the saints. In a nutshell, it states that all who abandon their faith were never truly saved to begin with. In the parable of the Sower (Mat. 13), Jesus explains exactly what the author of Hebrews is trying to say concerning those who appear to have faith but abandon it.

Mat. 13

20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;  
21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.  
(RSV)

What could be clearer? They have no root in themselves and when tribulation or persecution comes because of the Gospel message, they immediately fall away.

### 33 - *Faith that pleases God*

Hebrews 11:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the realization of what is hoped for, the proof of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by this the people of old were approved. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand the worlds were created by the word of God, in order that what is seen did not come into existence from what is visible.

(LEB)

Did you know there is only ONE definition of faith, and it is right here in verse one? Since we cannot please God without faith (Heb. 11:6) and since eternal life is grounded on faith (Rom. 10:9) is it not of the utmost importance that we understand what true faith is all about?

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the realization of what is hoped for, the proof of things not seen.

"Faith" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, belief). One definition of faith is that it is the conviction of the things of God and trusting in them. Faith is believing in what is not seen. Faith is the "*realization*" (HUPOSTASIS - concretely, essence, a setting under) of what is "*hoped*" (ELPIZO - to expect, trust, hoped for). So, biblical faith is the honest belief in God in which we place our hope. Faith is the "*proof*" (ELEGCHOS - proof, conviction, evidence) of things "*not seen*" (BLEPO - to look at, behold, perceive, see). Chrysostom wrote that "Faith gives reality or substance to the things hoped for." The French theologian Hugo de St-Victor (1096-1141) said that it is through faith alone that believers are certain of eternal things. In short, we can say that faith is the belief in the God of the Bible without having actually seen him. Do you have this kind of faith or is it more "I'll believe it when I'll see it"?

<sup>2</sup> For by this the people of old were approved.

If there is one main factor that links all the great people of "*old*" (PRESBUTEROS - elder, forefathers ) is that they were "*approved*" (MARTUREO - be well reported, obtain witness) by God. The author will prove this by giving us a list of people from the past

who are known for their faith. Since the Bible does not change can we say that today God still approves those who have real, honest and constant faith in him?

<sup>3</sup>By faith we understand the worlds were created by the word of God, in order that what is seen did not come into existence from what is visible.

There is much talk about creation in our times. So many theories, the "Big Bang" is the greatest of all. It all began with a "bang", science says, and the universe came into existence. But no one knows where the matter that made the universe came from or how it existed before this "bang"! The Bible is quite clear about creation.

### Genesis 1

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

(NKJV)

Before everything there was God. In this we place our faith. The God of the Bible created the heavens and the earth. In this we also place our faith. He did so just by speaking it into existence. All creation is brought forth by the desire of the Almighty.

By "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, belief) we "*understand*" (NOIEO - to exercise the mind, consider, heed) that the "*worlds*" (AION - an age, the world), the author is speaking of the entire universe, was made. Ultimately, I believe we can also include all the heavenly hosts who were also "*created*" (KATARTIZO - to complete thoroughly, make perfect) by the "*word*" (RHEMA - an utterance, word) of God. If we read the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, we will see that the Lord God simply spoke and the things that he desired came into existence.

v.3 ... in order that what is seen did not come into existence from what is visible.

We are told that what is "*seen*" (BLEPO - to look at, behold, perceive, to see) DID NOT come into "*existence*" (GINOMAI - to cause to be, to become) from what is "*visible*" (PHAINO - to shine, show, appear). What the author is teaching is that all that we can see with our eyes, from the grain of sand to the stars in the sky, everything was made out of something that is not visible.

God is not visible because he is a spirit (John 4:24) and his words of creation (that which he spoke) are also invisible, just as our words are invisible. We can conclude that the visible universe was born out of the desire of the invisible God of the Bible. So what is faith? The International Children's Bible (ICB) writes:

Faith means being sure of the things we hope for. And faith means knowing that something is real even if we do not see it.

(ICB)

I hope we can all be as children and understand what faith is.

## 34 - Faith before the flood

Hebrews 11:4-7

<sup>4</sup>By faith Abel offered to God a greater sacrifice than Cain, by which he was approved that he was righteous, *because* God approved *him* for his gifts, and through it he still speaks, *although he* is dead. <sup>5</sup>By faith Enoch was taken up, so that he did not experience death, and he was not found, because God took him up. For before his removal, he had been approved *as having been pleasing* to God. <sup>6</sup>Now without faith *it* is impossible to please *him*, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and is a rewarder of those who seek him. <sup>7</sup>By faith Noah, having been warned about things not yet seen, out of reverence constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family, by which he pronounced sentence on the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

(LEB)

In this chapter, which some call "The Hall of Fame of Faith," the author begins with three people of faith who lived before the great flood. As you study this chapter, you will notice that through all time, in whichever dispensation you find yourself, the importance of faith, or the "faith factor," always remains constant throughout the entire Bible. In other words, the importance of faith and the definition of faith never change.

<sup>4</sup>By faith Abel offered to God a greater sacrifice than Cain, by which he was approved that he was righteous, *because* God approved *him* for his gifts, and through it he still speaks, *although he* is dead.

Throughout this section, the word "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, belief) is always referred to with the same Greek word. The author first speaks of Abel who "*offered*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, present unto, offer up) to "*God*" (THEOS - the one true God, creator and sustainer of all things) a sacrifice. I would like to point out that all of our adoration, service, and good works are to be offered to God and NO ONE else. When people do offer up prayers, sacrifices, or worship to anyone other than God, the Bible calls this idolatry. Believers are told to flee idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14).

The author teaches that the offering of Abel (who is the younger brother of Adam and Eve) was "*greater*" (PLEISTOS PLEION - very great, more excellent) than that of his brother. Abel had offered a lamb from his flock, while Cain offered the fruit of the ground.

v.4 ... , by which he was approved that he was righteous, *because* God approved *him* for his gifts, and through it he still speaks, *although he* is dead.

Here we see two ways of worshipping the Lord God. Cain offered the labor of his hands (Gen. 4:3). Because God had cursed the land (Gen. 3:17) harvesting a good crop was not an easy thing and one had to work in the sweat of their faces. On the other hand, Abel offered the first born of his livestock (Gen. 4:4), which had no personal labor involved. The way of Cain represents faith by human work, and the way of Abel represents simple faith in God and his ways. Abel was "*approved*" (MARTUREO - bear record, obtain a good report) by God because he (Abel) was "*righteous*" (DIKAIOS - innocent, holy, just, righteous) in the Lord's eyes. In other words, Abel had done the right thing. God approved Abel for his "*gifts*" (DORON - a present, gift, offering) and they were accepted. You see, God approves of you when you do things his way. The author specifies that "through it" (his faith), Abel still speaks, although he is dead. In other words, the faith of Abel is still speaking to us concerning what true faith is. May we all have the faith of Abel, for Cain had no true faith but faith in himself and what he could do.

<sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken up, so that he did not experience death, and he was not found, because God took him up. For before his removal, he had been approved *as having been pleasing* to God.

The author now speaks of the faith of Enoch, who is a mysterious antediluvian (before the flood) believer, which we find in Gen. 4-5. What is spectacular about Enoch is that he never died! He never saw death because during his lifetime, God took him up to the heavens.

#### Genesis 5

22 Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

23 Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (RSV)

It is written that it was by faith that Enoch was "*taken up*" (METATHEMI - to transfer, remove, carry over), so that he did not "*experience*" (EIDO - to see, to know, be aware) "*death*" (THANATOS - death, to be dead). The bible doesn't say how this happened, only that God simply took him up!

v.5 ... and he was not found, because God took him up. For before his removal, he had been approved *as having been pleasing* to God.

Suddenly, Enoch was simply no longer to be "*found*" (HEURISKO - to find, get, obtain). The reason is that God "*took him up*" (METATITHEMI - to transfer, carry over). This reminds me of the only other person who never saw death, and that was Elijah. He was also taken up to the heavens, this time in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11). But why was Enoch "taken up"? The author tells us that he had been "*approved*" (MARTUREO - bear record, obtain a good report) and as having been "*pleasing*" (EUARESTEO - to gratify entirely) to God. Here the author is speaking of Enoch's faith.

<sup>6</sup> Now without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and is a rewarder of those who seek him.

After the definition of faith given by the author in verse one, this is the second most important verse in this chapter. Its importance is immeasurable for each individual who desires to approach the Lord God. It states that "*without*" (CHORIS - beside, by itself, without) faith it is "IMPOSSIBLE" (ADUNATOS - unable, impotent, impossible, unable to be done) to "*please*" (EUARESTEO - to gratify entirely) God! No matter what you do or what you may offer-even your own life, if you do not have biblical faith, you DO NOT please God. God says that the only way to become righteous is through the beloved Son, as we see in the following verses:

### Romans 3

21 But now without the law there is a revelation of the righteousness of God, to which witness is given by the law and the prophets;

22 That is, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all those who have faith; and one man is not different from another,

(BBE)

and we approach God without this faith in Christ, then we DO NOT please God.

v.6 ... for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and is a rewarder of those who seek him.

When a person "*approaches*" (PROSERCHOMAI - to approach, come near, draw near) God, he "*must*" (DEI - necessary, what is required to attain some end) "*believe*" (PISTEUO - to have faith, to entrust) that he "exists". It is impossible to approach God if we do not even believe that God exists. We can only mock God by approaching him and not accepting as true that he does exist. Our faith may be very small because we have never approached him before, but it is essential that we believe. If we believe that he exists, we must also come to the conclusion that he is the "*rewarder*" (MISTHAPODOTES - a remunerator, rewarder, recompense) of those who "*seek*" (EKZETEO - to search out, seek diligently) him. In other words, if a person desires to approach God, he must believe that he exists and that he will manifest himself to him.

<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, having been warned about things not yet seen, out of reverence constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family, by which he pronounced sentence on the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

In the final verse of our section, the author now speaks of the faith of Noah, who, under the instructions of the Lord, built an ark and also warned of the coming flood.

## 2 Peter 2

4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;

(NKJV)

We see the grace of God because he had "*warned*" (CHREMATIZO - to utter an oracle, reveal) about things "*not yet*" (MEDEPO - not even yet, not yet) "*seen*" (BLEPO - to look at, perceive). No one had ever heard of such a thing as a flood. So, by faith, after being

warned by the Lord God, Noah acted on his belief and, out of "*reverence*" (EULABEOMAI - moved with fear, to reverence) constructed an ark.

v.7 ... constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family, by which he pronounced sentence on the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

This ark was for the "*deliverance*" (SOTERIA - rescue, safety, deliver) of his family. Because of Noah's faith in God, the Lord decided to save him from the judgment to come by the flood. God was going to pronounce a "*sentence*" (KATAKRINO - to judge against, condemn, to judge against) on the world. Because of their wicked hearts, all of mankind was to be condemned, and God brought a great flood to destroy all of mankind except for Noah, his wife, three sons, and their wives. Noah became an "*heir*" (KLERONOMOS - a sharer by lot, inheritor) of the "*righteousness*" (DIKAISUNE - justification, equity, the condition acceptable to God) that comes by "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, conviction, assurance).

## 35 - *Abraham and Sarah*

Hebrews 11:8-12

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, *when he* was called, obeyed to go out to a place that he was going to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>For he was expecting the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder *is* God. <sup>11</sup>By faith also, *with Sarah*, he received *the ability to procreate even past the normal age*, because he regarded the one who had promised *to be* faithful. <sup>12</sup>And therefore these were fathered from one man, and *he* being as good as dead, as the stars of heaven in number and like the innumerable sand by the shore of the sea.

(LEB)

Now that the author has spoken about the three antediluvian faith "heroes," he will turn to the most famous person of faith-Abraham and his wife Sarah. May we remember that the apostle Paul wrote that true believers have the same faith as Abraham did (Rom. 4:16).

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham, *when he* was called, obeyed to go out to a place that he was going to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

This verse manifests the perfect balance between faith and the manifestation of faith. By "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, conviction, assurance) Abraham, when he was "*called*" (KALEO - to call, bid, call forth), "*obeyed*" (HUPAKOUO - to hear under, listen attentively, to heed). Note that it is God who calls people and not the opposite. Just as God chose Noah, Abraham, David, Mary, and so many others, everything begins with God initiating events.

John 6

37 All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.

(RSV)

So God called Abram (who would become Abraham) and what did Abram do? He "obeyed" the call of God. The true faith of Abram was manifest in that he obeyed to "go out" (EXERCHOMAI - to issue, come forth, get out, escape) to a "place" (TOPOS - location, place, a spot). At that time, Abram did not know where he was going or what the future held for him, but he trusted God. This is true faith, not knowing but following what the Lord says.

v.8 ... that he was going to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

All that Abram knew was that he was going to "receive" (LAMBANO - to take in, to seize, accept) an "inheritance" (KLERONOMIA - a possession, inheritance, patrimony). God promised him a land for him and his posterity. Abram simply believed God and began to walk with the Lord. It is written that he "went out" (EXERCHOMAI - to issue, come forth, get out, escape) "not knowing" (EPISTAMAI - to put the mind upon, listen attentively, to heed) where he was going. He trusted God even though he did not know where he was going. Should this not be the story of all who have been called by God? Should we not simply trust that God will lead us to our heavenly home?

<sup>9</sup>By faith he lived in the land of promise as a stranger, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise.

This is another aspect of the faith of Abraham. He "lived" (PAROIKEO - to dwell near, reside as a foreigner) in the land of "promise" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise). One might wonder why he lived in the land of promise "as a stranger" (ALLOTRIOS - foreign, alien, strange)? We will see the answer in our next verse. Abraham was living in "tents" (SKENE - a tent or cloth hut, habitation). This gives the idea that Abraham never settled down and built a permanent residence for himself and his family. Not only did Abraham live as a stranger, but so did his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. All three had received the same promise concerning the "promise land". They would be "heirs" (SUGKLERONOMOS - a co-heir, heir with) of the same promise—the original promise God had made to Abram to begin with.

<sup>10</sup> For he was expecting the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder *is* God.

Here we have the answer to why Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in tents and moved around instead of building a permanent home for themselves. Abraham was "*expecting*" (EKDECHOMAI - to await, expect, look for) the city that was very different than the ones he had known in his life. This city that he was looking for had different "*foundations*" (THEMELIOS - something put down, foundation). The "*architect*" (TECHNITES - an artisan, builder, craftsman) was going to be "*God*" (THEOS - the true God, creator and sustainer) himself. This should remind the followers of Christ that their true home is also not made by the hands of men but is in heaven. It is called the new Jerusalem.

#### Revelation 21

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were gone; and there was no more sea.

2 And I saw the holy town, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, like a bride made beautiful for her husband.

3 And there came to my ears a great voice out of the high seat, saying, See, the Tent of God is with men, and he will make his living-place with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God.

(BBE)

May all true believers never forget that our citizenship is not of the earth but of heaven, where we await the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).

<sup>11</sup> By faith also, *with Sarah*, he received *the ability to procreate even past the normal age*, because he regarded the one who had promised *to be* faithful.

The story of faith continues in the life of Abraham, and now Sarah is also pictured as a person of faith. Both were old but they "*received*" (LAMBANO - to take, to get hold of, receive) the "*ability*" (DUNAMIS - force, ability, might) to "*procreate*" (KATABOLE - conception, conceive). Even though they were past the "*normal age*", the Greek means "*beyond the time of maturity*". It has been said that God waited to give Abraham and Sarah a child in their "*old age*", when they were past the human capacity to procreate,

simply to manifest that this was from him and not the natural result of intercourse between a husband and a wife.

v.11 ... because he regarded the one who had promised *to be* faithful.

Once again, we see the faith of Abraham, for he regarded the one (God) who had "*promised*" (EPAGGELLO - to engage to do something, promise) to be "*faithful*" (PISTOS - trustworthy, faithful, sure). If we could also have this undivided faith in the Almighty. If we could also stand firm on God's promises, knowing with certainty that he will keep his word, Would that not lift many of the burdens that weigh upon our shoulders?

<sup>12</sup>And therefore these were fathered from one man, and *he* being as good as dead, as the stars of heaven in number and like the innumerable sand by the shore of the sea.

Here we see the outcome of the faith of Abraham. He "*fathered*" (GENNAO - to regenerate, bring forth, make) even though he was as good as "*dead*" (NEKROO - to deaden, to subdue, to be dead). He was beyond any hope of fathering a child, and so was Sarah. But they did—the Lord kept his promise. How many times in the Bible do we see the Lord God come to the aid of the nation of Israel or an individual when all hope appears to be lost?

The descendents of this man of faith were as numerous as the "*stars*" (ASTRON - a constellation, a star) of "*heaven*" (OURANOS - the sky, heaven). One must understand that the author is speaking of the stars that could be seen by the human eye (which is limited) and not through a telescope (which is countless). His descendants would be like the "*innumerable*" (PLETHOS - a large number, multitude) sand by the "*shore of the sea*" (CHEILOS - a margin of water, shore). This is a figure of speech to make us imagine the great number of descendents Abraham and Sarah would have.

Because of the faith of Abraham, God made a great nation come forth and walk the earth. A nation that would give the world the Messiah who would die so that full and eternal forgiveness could be given to those who would repent of their sins and ask Christ to save them. Remember what Jesus said about faith:

Matthew 17

20 So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

(NKJV)

Are we not often like Peter when Jesus called him out to walk on the water with him? Do we not also lack faith and begin to sink when we take our eyes off the Lord?

Matthew 14

31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

(RSV)

Yes, why do we doubt?

## *36 - Faith and hope*

Hebrews 11:13-16

<sup>13</sup>These all died in faith without receiving the promises, but seeing them from a distance and welcoming *them*, and admitting that they were strangers and temporary residents on the earth. <sup>14</sup>For those who say such *things* make clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup>And if they remember that *land* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup>But now they aspire to a better *land*, that is, a heavenly *one*. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

(LEB)

This section sums up the thoughts of the hearts of the people mentioned in our last section (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob).

<sup>13</sup>These all died in faith without receiving the promises, but seeing them from a distance and welcoming *them*, and admitting that they were strangers and temporary residents on the earth.

The author begins by saying that they all "*died*" (APOTHNESKO - to die off, be dead, be slain). They all grew old and died naturally. Abraham died when he was 175 years old (Gen. 25:7), Sarah died when she was 127 years old (Gen. 23:1), Isaac was 180 years old when he died (Gen. 35:28) and Jacob was 147 years old when he died (Gen. 47:28). The author also writes that they died "*in faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction). In other words, they did not abandon their faith in the Most High God. Even though they all had difficult lives in one way or another, and had their mishaps, they kept on believing until the very end. These four were certainly, and still are, a model for all true believers.

It is written that they died "*without*" (LAMBANO - to take, get a hold of, attain) attaining or receiving the "*promises*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise). These are the promises that the Lord God has given to Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob concerning the "Promise Land". This was the original promise made to Abraham, which was later given to Abraham's son Isaac and then to his son Jacob.

### Genesis 12

1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

(NKJV)

So they died without receiving the promises. In other words, in their lifetime, they did not inherit the land that God had promised them and their descendants. So how did they feel about this? The author tells us.

v.13 ... but seeing them from a distance and welcoming *them*, and admitting that they were strangers and temporary residents on the earth.

They DID NOT step into the land but "*seeing*" (EIDO - to see, to know, be aware) them (the promises) from a "*distance*" (PORRHOTHEN - from afar, at a distance). We can imagine that in their minds and hearts, they spiritually saw the good land that was promised to them. Not only did they see it in their minds, but they also were "*welcoming*" (ASPAZOMAI - to enfold in the arms, embrace) "*them*" (all the promises). I compare this to a true believer who waits for the promises of God of a mansion in heaven promised by Christ (John 14:2). After reading the last chapters of the book of Revelations, a person can actually imagine what it will be like in the New Jerusalem and look forward to the day when those promises to him will be fulfilled.

We also see that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob all had something else in common besides being family. They all "*admitted*" (HOMOLOGEO - profess, to assent) that they were "*strangers*" (XENOS - foreign, alien, stranger) and "*temporary residents*" (PAREPIDEMOS - a resident foreigner, pilgrim) on the earth. Having received such

promises from God, they knew that their true home was not here on earth. May we all be like these four people and remember that our true home is not here either. The apostle Paul reminds the Philippians of this truth.

### Philippians 3

20 But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,  
(RSV)

How was it manifest that they saw themselves as pilgrims?

<sup>14</sup> For those who say such *things* make clear that they are seeking a homeland.

It was because of their own testimony. It seems that they "*say such things*" (EMPHANIZO - to exhibit, disclose, declare plainly) themselves! By doing so, they made it very clear that they were "*seeking*" (EPIZETEO - to search, inquire, desire) a "*homeland*" (PATRIS - a father-land, native town). One way or another, people knew that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob were looking for another place, a place where they would permanently settle.

<sup>15</sup> And if they remember that *land* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

This verse teaches us that these people were looking forward. The Lord God had given them promises, and their eyes were set upon them. The author argues that if they "*remembered*" (MNEMONEUO - to exercise memory, remember) that land from which they "*went out*" (EXERCHOMAI - to issue, come forth, get out) they would have had the "*opportunity*" (KAIROS - an occasion, proper time) to "*return*" (ANAKAMPTO - to turn back, return). You see, the four of the faith were NOT like their descendants, who, once they were freed from slavery in Egypt and were heading for the Promise Land DID look back and even wanted to go back!

### Exodus 16

1 And they went on their way from Elim, and all the children of Israel came into the waste land of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they went out of the land of Egypt.

2 And all the children of Israel were crying out against Moses and Aaron in the waste land:

3 And the children of Israel said to them, It would have been better for the Lord to have put us to death in the land of Egypt, where we were seated by the flesh-pots and had bread enough for our needs; for you have taken us out to this waste of sand, to put all this people to death through need of food.

(BBE)

But these four DID NOT return to where they came from, they kept on following the Lord wherever He led them. Do we sometimes "look back" and believe that the "good days" were before knowing the Lord? Does your heart sometimes wish you could live in the "flesh" as you once did? May we never be like Demas, who abandoned his ministry with Paul to go back to the world (2 Tim. 4:10) which he had been taken out of.

<sup>16</sup> But now they aspire to a better *land*, that is, a heavenly *one*. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

The author now explains what they did look forward to. It is written that they "*aspire to*" (OREGOMAI - to reach out after, long for) a "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, nobler, best, better) land. What land are they aspiring for? It is a "*heavenly one*" (EPOURANIOS - above the sky, celestial, high). Jesus promises all of his true disciples that they will also have a heavenly home.

#### John 14

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

(NKJV)

We must also be like Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob and not look back or even desire to go back, but rather walk in faith with our Lord God, trusting and believing in his promises for all his adopted children.

v.16 ... Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Because these four believers held strongly to the promises of the Lord, this strengthened their relationship with Him. It is written that God is "*not ashamed*" (EPAISCHUNOMAI - to feel shame for something) of them. This reminds me of how God looked favorably on Job before the celestial hosts. He was not ashamed to be called their "*God*" (THEOS - the one true God, creator and sustainer). He is so not ashamed to be called their God that he has "*prepared*" (HETOIMAZO - to prepare, provide, make ready) for them a "*city*" (POLIS - a town with walls, a city).

May the Lord not be ashamed of all of us who call ourselves disciples of Christ. May we never be ashamed of the One who saved us from the judgment to come.

## *37 - Faith of the Patriarchs*

Hebrews 11:17-22

<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, *when he* was tested, offered Isaac, and the one who received the promises was ready to offer his one and only *son*, <sup>18</sup> with reference to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants will be named," <sup>19</sup> having reasoned that God *was* able even to raise *him* from the dead, from which he received him back also as a symbol. <sup>20</sup> By faith also Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things that were going to happen. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, *as he* was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, *as he* was dying, mentioned about the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave instructions about his bones.  
(LEB)

In our section, we will see that the author shows how these four patriarchs manifested their faith. True faith is one of the heart, with fruits that bear witness to the truthfulness of our conviction and devotion to the God of Israel.

<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, *when he* was tested, offered Isaac, and the one who received the promises was ready to offer his one and only *son*, <sup>18</sup> with reference to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants will be named,"<sup>[k]</sup> <sup>19</sup> having reasoned that God *was* able even to raise *him* from the dead, from which he received him back also as a symbol.

Again, the word "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction) is the same as all the other times this word is used in this chapter. One can be certain that the word "faith" always has its same meaning throughout. The author begins with Abraham since he is the first of the patriarchs. Notice that his faith was "*tested*" (PEIRAZO - to test, scrutinize, examine). It is not unusual for the Lord God to "test" the faith of those who belong to him. In fact, we see over and over again in the Old and also the New Testament that men and women of God are tested. I believe that this testing is not for God since he knows everything and searches every heart. It is rather for the individual so that he can see if his faith is true and how far his faith will remain unshaken. James explains it this way:

James 1

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

(NKJV)

How far will God go to test the faith of his chosen ones?

v.17 ... *when he* was tested, offered Isaac, and the one who received the promises was ready to offer his one and only *son*

The test was that Isaac had to be "*offered*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, to lead to, present a thing). We all know the story of when God called Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:6-10). We also know that God NEVER intended Abraham to slay his son, God has NEVER asked for a human sacrifice!

Genesis 22

10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

(NKJV)

What we do see is that Abraham, who "*received*" (ANADECHOMAI - to receive, to take up) the "*promises*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise) was ready to "*offer*" (PROSPHERO - to bear towards, to lead to, present) his one and "*only son*" (MONOGENES - only-born, only begotten child). His faith was truly unbelievable, and that is why Abraham is called the "friend of God" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Did you know that Abraham was the ONLY ONE who was called a friend of God

the Father in the Bible? Even Moses was never called a "friend of God" but rather "My servant Moses" (Num. 12:7,8). Abraham had his faults, but he was truly a man of immense faith.

<sup>18</sup> with reference to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants will be named" (Gen. 21:12) which spoke concerning Isaac, that he would be the head of his "descendants" (SPERMA - issue, seed). God had promised that Abraham would have a son and that from him his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5,6). God kept his promise as he always does.

<sup>19</sup> having reasoned that God *was* able even to raise *him* from the dead, from which he received him back also as a symbol.

Have you ever wondered what the thoughts of Abraham were when God told him to go and sacrifice his son on the mountain top? The author gives us a glimpse of his reasons why he was ready to do so. Abraham had "*reasoned*" (LOGIZOMAI - to take an inventory, conclude). Abraham thought about what God was asking him to do and came to the conclusion that God was "*able*" (DUNATOS - powerful, capable, be able) even to "*raise him*" (EGEIRO - to waken, rouse from sleep) from the "*dead*" (NEKROS - dead, a corpse). He knew that the Lord God was powerful enough to take his lifeless son and bring him back to existence. For Abraham, there was no limit to the capacity of his God. He also understood that he would "*receive*" (KOMIZO - obtain, receive, bring) him back as a "*symbol*" (PARABOLE - a similitude, adage, figure). All of this meant something spiritual to Abraham, though we don't know what it meant for him.

<sup>20</sup> By faith also Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things that were going to happen.

Our second patriarch is Isaac, and we will see how his faith was manifested. The author chose to speak of his last days on earth. A time came when Isaac "*blessed*" (EULOGEO - to speak well of, to bless, to praise) both of his twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Have you noticed that even though Esau was the first born, he is named in second place? The simple reason is that Esau had renounced his birthright in favour of his brother Jacob

for a simple bowl of red stew (Gen. 25:30-34). Isaac blessed his two sons concerning "*things that were going to happen*" (MELLO - be about to be). Because of his faith, Isaac truly believed in the promise that his father and himself had received from God concerning having a vast number of descendents. It was because of his faith in God that Isaac, even though he did not see these descendents as vast as the stars in the sky, believed in them and blessed his two sons.

<sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, *as he* was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

Since Esau sold his birthright, the author continues with Jacob, for he was the next patriarch and not his brother. His faith, as with his father, was manifested when he was very old in age. Jacob was at the doorstep of death for he was "*dying*" (APOTHNESKO - to die off, be dead, be slain). Jacob "*blessed*" (EULOGEO - to speak well of, to bless, praise) each of the "*sons*" (HUIOS - a son, a child, kinship) of Joseph. Why would he do this? Why would Jacob bless Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 46:20) instead of Joseph? The answer is that it was through Manasseh and Ephraim that the lineage of the promise of God would continue. Have you ever noticed that, despite the fact that Joseph was one of Jacob's twelve sons (who later formed the twelve tribes of Israel), there is NO tribe of Joseph, but rather one for Manasseh and one for Ephraim? That is why Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph and not Joseph.

After Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, it is written that he "*worshipped*" (PROSKUNEO - to crouch, prostrate oneself). Even when he was at the door of eternity, he took time to worship. May we also take the events that life brings to worship the Lord God. He worshipped "*leaning*". We see that Jacob was frail and needed his "*staff*" (RHABDOS - a stick, a cane, a rod). Here we see the attitude of Jacob's heart: it was filled with reverence. He stood up even when his body was about to pass away.

<sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, *as he* was dying, mentioned about the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave instructions about his bones.

Our final patriarch is Joseph. He was the son who had been sold into slavery by his brothers and later jailed for years because of a woman's lie. His faith was manifested through all of his ordeals, trials, and sufferings. For as soon as he was brought into the

presence of Pharaoh to interpret his dream, he spoke of God (Gen. 41:16) to him. His faith was so strong that when he was "*dying*" (TELEUTAO - to finish life, expire, decease) he "*mentioned*" (MNEMONEUO - to exercise memory, recollect) in fact, Joseph prophesized about the "*exodus*" (EXODOS - an exit, departing) of the sons of Israel. God had told him concerning his descendants and how they would be enslaved in Egypt. He also knew that one day they would be set free and be guided by God to the Promise Land. Believing this, Joseph gave "*instructions*" (ENTELLOMAI - to enjoin, command) about his bones. Joseph was dying and was to be buried in Egypt. He foresaw his descendants entering the Promise Land and wanted his bones to be taken from Egypt and be buried where his ancestors would live.

May we remember these four brave patriarchs, who were not perfect in life but had strong faith in God. May we be as they were, solidly standing on our rock of faith, which is Christ Jesus.

### 38 - *The faith of Moses*

Hebrews 11:23-29

<sup>23</sup> By faith Moses, *when he* was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw the child *was* handsome, and they were not afraid of the edict of the king. <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, *when he* was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing instead to be mistreated with the people of God *rather* than to experience the transitory enjoyment of sin, <sup>26</sup> considering *reproach endured for the sake of Christ* greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king, for he persevered as *if he* saw the invisible one. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, in order that the one who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. <sup>29</sup> By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; the Egyptians, *when they made the attempt*, were drowned.

(LEB)

Before we begin, I would like to note that in this section there are two unsung heroes. Without their outstanding faith, Moses would never have lived very long. Two people who are not mentioned by name but by affiliation to Moses, two people who God has not forgotten.

<sup>23</sup> By faith Moses, *when he* was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw the child *was* handsome, and they were not afraid of the edict of the king.

Amram and Jochebed are the "*parents*" (PATER - a father, a parent) of Moses (Ex. 6:20). It was by their "*faith*" (PISTIS - credence, persuasion, moral conviction) that when Moses was born, he was "*hidden*" (KRUPTO - to conceal, hide, keep secret) for three months. They knew that what was asked by Pharaoh (to kill all the male newborns) displeased God, so to their great peril, if they had been found out, they hid him. Moses was a "*handsome*" (ASTEIOS - fair, elegant of body) baby. Seeing their newborn child and how fair he was, they were "*not afraid*" (PHOBEO - to be alarmed, fear) of the edict

of Pharaoh and kept him alive. May all true believers be as courageous as they were in standing up to what the Lord God says is wrong, even if it comes at a cost.

<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, *when he* was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter

The eyes of the author of Hebrews now turn to Moses, who is called the greatest of all legislators of all time by some. Again, we see that the main ingredient that makes all that is written is "*faith*" (PISTIS - credence, persuasion, moral conviction). The faith of Moses is first manifested when he was "*grown up*" (MEGAS - high, large, strong, years). It is often the case that it is only when we are adults that our faith is truly manifested. When Moses was an adult, he "*refused*" (ARNEOMAI - reject, disavow, refuse) to be called the "*son*" (HUIOS- a son, child, kinship) of Pharaoh's "*daughter*" (THUGATER - a female child, daughter). At one point in his life, a radical change came upon him. He had enjoyed all that the highest royalty in Egypt could offer. It seems that something inside became greater than all the treasures of Egypt. This will be disclosed in our next verse.

<sup>25</sup> choosing instead to be mistreated with the people of God *rather* than to experience the transitory enjoyment of sin,

He "*chose*" (HAIREOMAI - to take for oneself, prefer, choose) "*instead*" (MALLON - for the more, rather) to be "*mistreated*" (SUGKAKOUCHEO - to maltreat in company with) with the people of God. Moses realized that his people were not of the Egyptian royalty but rather of the numerous Hebrew slaves. The choice Moses faced was to either be part of God's people or "*experience*" (APOLAUSIS - full enjoyment) the "*transitory*" (PROSKAIROS - for the occasion only) enjoyment of "*sin*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offence). We can say that when Moses saw the sufferings of his people, there was a complete heart-change. The world, its pleasures, and all it could offer meant nothing compared to his new-found love.

Is this not a perfect example of what should happen to those who turn to Jesus? Are we not also to reject all that the world has to offer for our newfound love of our Messiah? This is how Paul expressed himself about this:

### Philippians 3

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. (NKJV)

<sup>26</sup> considering *reproach endured for the sake of Christ* greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

Moses took time to think about what he was about to do. We see that he was "*considering*" (HEGEOMAI - to deem, consider, esteem) these things. On one hand were all the riches, glory, power, and honor that the kingdom of Egypt could offer; on the other hand was "*reproach*" (ONEIDISMOS - suffering for the cause of God) for the sake of "*Christ*" (CHRISTOS - the Messiah). It is evident that Moses did not know Christ-Jesus, for Jesus came centuries after Moses lived. The idea given here is that Moses was ready to suffer for the sake of the coming Messiah (which is what Christ means in Hebrew).

He saw that the reproaches for the sake of the coming Messiah (Christ) had a "*greater*" (MEIZON - larger, greater, more) "*wealth*" (PLOUTOS - wealth, abundance, richness) than the treasures of Egypt. This reminds me of the parables Jesus told:

### Matthew 13

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,  
46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

(RSV)

Only when Moses discovered a new treasure or a pearl of great price in his fellow Hebrews and the coming Messiah did he seem willing to abandon everything to partake with them.

v.26 ... greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

In his eyes, they had greater wealth than the "*treasures*" (THESAUROS - a deposit, wealth, treasure) of Egypt. As for us, it is only when we realize the wealth of the treasure which Christ the Messiah truly is that we can gladly abandon what we have for the "*reward*" (MISTHAPODOSIA - requital, reward, recompense) of having Christ. The author ends his section concerning Moses by listing three things that Moses did by faith.

<sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king, for he persevered as *if he saw* the invisible one.

The first is that Moses left Egypt by "*faith*". When he did so, the author tells us that he did not "*fear*" (PHOBEO - fearful sight, a frightening thing) the "*anger*" (THUMOS - indignation, wrath, fierceness) of the king. The author also gives us the reason why Moses left without any fear. It is written that he "*persevered*" (KARTEREO - to be strong, steadfast, endure) as if he "*saw*" (HORAIO - to stare at, discern clearly) the invisible one. I believe the "invisible one" is the Lord God. It is as though the author is saying that Moses could see into what was invisible, and that is what made him strong as he fled Egypt.

<sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, in order that the one who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

The second is that by faith, Moses "*kept*" (POIEO - to make or do, abide) the Passover (Ex. 12) and also the "*sprinkling*" (PROSCHUSIS - to pour, a shedding forth, effusion) of the blood. This is a reference to the blood of the sacrificed lambs that was put on the doorposts where the people needed to remain inside. They had to remain inside because the one who "*destroyed*" (OLOTHEREUO - to spoil, slay, destroy) the firstborn would not "*touch*" (THIGGANO - to manipulate, have to do with) them. This is the tenth plague (Ex. 11) that God poured on Egypt. We see that by faith, Moses believed what the Lord told him and acted upon the command of the Almighty.

<sup>29</sup> By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; the Egyptians, *when they made the attempt*, were drowned.

This is the third thing that the author mentions about the faith of Moses, but this time he also includes the Hebrew nation. It was by faith that they ALL "*crossed*" (DIABAINO - to cross, to pass through) the Red Sea. Not only did God make a pathway by separating the waters, he also made their path as though it was "*dry land*" (XEROS - arid, dry land, withered). The land had to be dry if the people were to be able to walk upon it and pass to the other side.

There is a distinction made between God's people and others. I believe it is a picture of spiritual reality that we all need to understand. There are two groups of people mentioned in the text - the Hebrews (God's people) and the Egyptians (non-believers). When God's people walked on the path by faith to the other side, they made it without any difficulty. When the other group, who had no faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, tried to also get to the other side, they "*drowned*" (KATAPINO - devour, drown, swallow-up), the waters came back to their former state.

This can be a picture of entering heaven. Those with faith do enter, and those without true faith or no faith at all do not.

### 39 - Faith that triumphs

Hebrews 11:30-40

<sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down *after they* had been marched around for seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, *because she* welcomed the spies in peace.

<sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, accomplished justice, obtained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> extinguished the effectiveness of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong from weakness, became mighty in battle, put to flight enemy battle lines. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead by resurrection. But others were tortured, not accepting release, in order that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> And others *experienced mocking and flogging*, and in addition bonds and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by murder with a sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, impoverished, afflicted, mistreated, <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about on deserts and mountains and in caves and in holes in the ground. <sup>39</sup> And *although they* all were approved through their faith, they did not receive what was promised, <sup>40</sup> *because* God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without

us.

(LEB)

In our final section of Hebrews eleven, the author will give us a variety of people who are known for their faith, as he did with the parents of Moses in our last section some are not even named. We can separate this section into two segments. The first deals with happy and victorious people of faith (v.30-35a) while the second deals with people who were not victorious over their enemies but remained faithful until the very end (v.35b-40).

<sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell down *after they* had been marched around for seven days.

The author speaks of God's people moving forward in "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction). It was by faith that the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6) "*fell down*" (PIPTO - to fall down, fail, fall into ruin). They fell down after the people had "*marched*" (KUKLOO - to encircle, surround) for seven days. The Lord God had given them this command:

Joshua 6

3 "You shall march around the city, all you men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days.

4 "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

(NKJV)

Even though it seemed impossible for walls to fall down by simply marching around the city and blowing their trumpets, by faith they followed the Lord's directives and the walls did fall down and they captured Jericho.

<sup>31</sup> By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, *because she* welcomed the spies in peace.

The writer continues with the story of Jericho and speaks of Rahab the "*prostitute*" (PORNE - harlot, whore). It was by faith that she did not "*perish*" (SUNAPOLLUMI - to destroy, be slain, perish) with those who were "*disobedient*" (APEITHEO - to disbelieve, unbelieving). The reason why she did not perish is that in faith she "*welcomed*" (DECHOMAI - to receive, accept, take) the spies in "*peace*" (EIRENE - pacific, salutary, peaceable). She actually hid the spies and lied concerning their whereabouts. She only asked that her family would be safe when they came to conquer the city, and they were all left untouched (Joshua 6:17).

<sup>32</sup> And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel and the prophets

In this verse, the author speaks of seven different people, the last being a group of unnamed heroes of the faith.

The author makes it very clear that the list of faithful people could go on and on, but does take time to name a few of the important ones. The first is Gideon (Judges 6), one of the judges of Israel, who by faith won a battle against the Midianites. The second is Barak (Judges 4), who, along with the prophetess Deborah, by faith, won the battle against the King of Canaan. The third is Samson (Judges 13-16), who was a judge in Israel. By faith, Samson won over the Philistines. The fourth is Jephthah (Judges 11) also a judge in Israel who by faith won over the Ammonites. The fifth is King David, who was probably the greatest king of Israel. He was hand-picked by the Lord himself (1 Samuel 16:1-12). The sixth was Samuel (1 Sam.1) who was a judge and prophet in Israel. The seventh is a group of people known as the prophets. They are present here and there in the history of Israel and played a great role in bearing God's message to his people. Think of Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and so many others who, by their faith, persevered in the Lord's work even at great expense.

<sup>33</sup>who through faith conquered kingdoms, accomplished justice, obtained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>extinguished the effectiveness of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong from weakness, became mighty in battle, put to flight enemy battle lines. <sup>35</sup>Women received back their dead by resurrection.

In these verses, the author describes the incredible things that were done through them or for them because of their outstanding faith in the God of Israel. It was through "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction) that the following things became true.

The first is that "*kingdoms*" (BASILEIA - a realm, kingdom, reign) were "*conquered*" (KATAGONIZOMAI - to struggle against, overcome, subdue). This may refer to the general history of God's people conquering the seven nations that lived in the Promise Land before they arrived.

The second is that by faith they "*accomplished*" (ERGAZOMAI - effect, task, occupation) "*justice*" (DIKAIOSUNE - equity of character or act, justice or the virtue which gives each his due). This may refer to the execution of the laws and justice of God against the heathen nations in Palestine.

The third is that by faith they "*obtained*" (EPITUGCHANO - to attain, obtain, to chance upon) what was "*promised*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise). They received the blessings the Lord had promised them if they would walk in his ways.

The fourth is that by faith they "*shut*" (PHRASSO - to fence in or enclose, stop) the mouths of lions. We see that this happened with Samson (Judges 14:6), David (1 Sam. 17:34) and Daniel (Dan. 6:7). They either killed or rendered harmless these ferocious beasts.

<sup>34</sup> extinguished the effectiveness of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong from weakness, became mighty in battle, put to flight enemy battle lines. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead by resurrection.

The fifth is that by faith some "*extinguished*" (SBENNUMI - to extinguish, quench) the "*effectiveness*" (DUNAMIS - force, violence, power) of fire. This may refer to the three friends of Daniel who were thrown in the furnace and came out alive and well (Dan. 3:15-26)

The sixth is that by faith some "*escaped*" (PHEUGO - to run away, vanish, escape) the edge of the "*sword*" (MACHAIRA - a knife, dirk, a sword). Many people of faith escaped death in battles or wars. David, Elijah, Elisha, and others avoided execution.

The seventh is that by faith some were made "*strong*" (ENDUNAMOO - to empower, make strong) from "*weakness*" (ASTHENEIA - feebleness of mind or body). Think of Moses, Gideon, Joshua, and others who had to be encouraged and empowered by God to do his bidding. Because of this they became "*mighty*" (ISCHUROS - mighty, powerful, strong) in battle. They were able to "*put to flight*" (KLINO - bow down, turn to flight) enemy "*battle lines*" (PAREMBOLE - battle array, army camp).

The eighth is that by faith, "*women*" (GUNE - a woman especially a wife) "*received back*" (LAMBANO - to take, to seize, accept) their "*dead*". (NEKROS - a corpse, dead) by "*resurrection*" (ANASTASIS - a standing up again, resurrection). This could speak of the widow's son, for whom Elijah was the instrument to raise her son from death (1 Kings 17:17-24).

The author surely desires to impress the hearts of his readers, desiring them not to disbelieve but to understand the power that lies in the Lord God when we believe in him.

35b ... But others were tortured, not accepting release, in order that they might gain a better resurrection.

Here we begin our second section concerning the heroes of the faith. The ones who do not look like heroes in the eyes of men, but certainly in the eyes of the Lord God.

Once again, the author does not name anyone. In a way, this is a good thing because people throughout the centuries could have placed their own names if they were going through the same things. Some were "*tortured*" (TUMPANIZO - beat to death, a beating stick, torture) but did not accept (PROSDECHOMAI - accept, allow, await) "*release*" (APOLUTROSIS - ransom in full, deliverance). The ones torturing these true believers at some point probably told them that if they recanted their faith they would be released and the torture would end, but they refused.

The author gives the reason why these people refused to recant. It was in order that they might "*gain*" (TUGCHANO - a mark to be reached) a "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, nobler) resurrection. They knew that their eternal reward would be much greater than the temporary gain they may have gotten on earth. They desired to stand before the Lord without any shame, embarrassment, or the disgrace of having disowned him. We all know what happened to Peter after he denied Christ!

#### Matthew 26

74 Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man."  
And immediately the cock crowed.

75 And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

(RSV, my underlining)

The author continues describing what sort of life some believers suffered.

<sup>36</sup> And others *experienced mocking and flogging*, and in addition bonds and imprisonment.

Other unsung heroes "*experienced*" (PEIRA - a test, attempt, trial) "*mocking*" (EMPAIGNMOS - derision, mocking) and "*flogging*" (MASTIX - a whip, scourging). This reminds me of the passion of Christ, where he also experienced whipping and mocking from the crowds. They taunted him while he was crucified.

#### Matthew 27

39 And those who went by said bitter words to him, shaking their heads and saying,  
40 You who would give the Temple to destruction and put it up again in three days, get yourself free: if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 In the same way, the chief priests, making sport of him, with the scribes and those in authority, said,

42 A saviour of others, he has no salvation for himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will have faith in him.

(BBE)

Not only did they suffer mocking and flogging, but some also suffered "*bonds*" (DESMON - shackle, bond, chain) and "*imprisonment*" (PHULAKE - a guarding, a cage, prison). Their liberty was taken from them and they were thrown in prison simply for bearing the name of Christ. Countless true believers are today continuing to be tortured and imprisoned—may we never forget them in our prayers.

<sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by murder with a sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, impoverished, afflicted, mistreated,

These few verses may be the most difficult to read in the epistles. We get a glimpse of the real cost that believers often pay for their faith. Some were "*stoned*" (LITHAZO - to lapidate, stone). Instantly, we remember Stephen, who was stoned to death (Acts 7:59). Because of their faith, some were "*sawed*" (PRIZO - to saw in two). This was a means of torture that existed in ancient times, but there are no records of this in the Bible. Others died by "*murder*" (PHONOS - murder, be slain, slaughter) with a "*sword*" (MACHAIRA - a knife, dirk, sword). Often, prisoners were given a very slow death by being cut into pieces!

Still, because of their faith, some were not killed, tortured, ridiculed or imprisoned, but they were disowned of all their possessions and left to "*wander*" (PERIERCHOMAI - to come all around, vagabond) with only sheepskin or goatskin to hide their nudity. The author describes these believers as "*impoverished*" (HUSTEREO - to be inferior, fail, destitute), "*afflicted*" (THLIBO - afflict, suffer tribulation, trouble) and "*mistreated*" (KAKOUCHEO - to maltreat, torment, adversity). As you can see, there was a hefty cost to following in the footsteps of Jesus the Messiah.

<sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about on deserts and mountains and in caves and in holes in the ground.

These believers, who lived as castaways, imprisoned, tortured, and stolen from, these men and women of God, lived in a "*world*" (KOSMOS - orderly arrangement, the universe, the world) that was "*not worthy*" (AXIOS - deserving, suitable, worthy) of them who were looked upon with disdain. They were actually sons and daughters of the Most High. By violence, they were forced to be "*wondering*" (PLANO - to roam, go astray, wander) about. They lived in "*deserts*" (EREMIA - solitude, desert, wilderness) as though they were lepers. They also made the "*mountains*" (OROS - a mountain, hill), "*caves*" (SPELAION - a caverns, cave) and "*holes*" (OPE - a hole, fissures in the earth) their dwellings. They became the outcasts of society and were blamed for any calamity or upheaval that naturally occurred.

<sup>39</sup> And *although they* all were approved through their faith, they did not receive what was promised,

I believe that this is an important verse that all true believers should understand so that they will stop doubting the Lord God. These believers who suffered tremendously at the hands of evil people were "*approved*" (MARTUREO - bear record, good report, testimony) and received an honorable testimony from the Lord God. This makes me think of one of the parables Jesus taught about receiving a good testimony.

Matthew 25

20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'

21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'  
(NKJV)

They were approved by God because of their "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction) yet they did not "*receive*" (KOMIZO - take care of, bring, receive) what was "*promised*" (EPAGGELIA - an announcement, pledge, promise). Some believe that if you walk with the Lord, you will be protected from all harm. Anyone who has read the Bible knows that this is not so. Paul told Timothy the following concerning Christian life:

2 Timothy 3

10 Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,

11 my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

12 Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,  
(RSV)

The author ends his section by giving the reason why true believers may not receive their blessings right away.

<sup>40</sup> *because* God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.

We have a very short view of life in general. We desire the things that we see and believe that this is the ultimate blessing one can receive. If this is what we believe as disciples of Christ, then we have learned very little about true spirituality. Some did not receive earthly blessings simply because "*God*" (THEOS - the one true God, creator and sustainer) had "*provided*" (PROBLEPO - to look out beforehand, provide) something "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, nobler, better) for us. There are things that await

believers that are far better than what they can see with their eyes. All the riches of the world are like rust in heaven! The last phrase speaks of togetherness. The author states that they would not be made "*perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, make perfect) without us (the present believers). In other words, true bliss and harmony with God will be given to all of God's children at the same time. This may refer to when all true believers are gathered together and live in the New Jerusalem in the presence of the Lord God.

#### Revelation 21

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were gone; and there was no more sea.

2 And I saw the holy town, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, like a bride made beautiful for her husband.

3 And there came to my ears a great voice out of the high seat, saying, See, the Tent of God is with men, and he will make his living-place with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God.

(BBE)

## 40 - *Running the race of faith*

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, *since* we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, putting aside every weight and *the sin that so easily ensnares us*, let us run with patient endurance the race that has been set before us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the originator and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>For consider the one who endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary in your souls *and* give up.

(LEB)

We could say this section has to do with running as hard as we can and never giving up, no matter what happens.

Therefore, *since* we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, putting aside every weight and *the sin that so easily ensnares us*, let us run with patient endurance the race that has been set before us,

As we have seen before in other sections, the word "*therefore*" (TOIGAROUN - truly for then, consequently) links one section with another. When we read this section, we have to keep in mind what has been said in the one before it (Hebrews 10:30-40). The author tells us that we have "*such a great*" (TOSOUTOS - so vast as this, as large, so great) "*cloud*" (NEPHOS - a cloud) of "*witnesses*" (MARTUS - a witness, record). The author does not say who they are, but we do know who these witnesses are. Some believe he is speaking of all the angels who look down upon us, but this is false. He is speaking of the witnesses we have read about in his last section (even chapter). He is speaking of the witness we have received from: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets, unnamed men and women—all who lived a life of faith. With the witnesses of these believers that are there before our very eyes, what are true believers to do?

The author insists that there are mainly two things we ought to do. The first is the "*putting aside*" (APOTITHEMI - to put away, lay apart, cast off) of two things. The first is to set aside EVERY "*weight*" (OGKOS - a burden, hindrance, weight). These are things that slow us down from running as we should. Things that simply take too much place in our hearts and minds. Because of this, we misuse the time that the Lord gives us in life. The apostle Paul wrote it this way:

1 Corinthians 15

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.  
(NKJV)

It would be a good thing to look at our lives and what we do and how much time it takes from us to see if we should not cease doing some of them.

v.1 ... and *the sin that so easily ensnares us*, let us run with patient endurance the race that has been set before us,

How are believers to set aside EVERY weight that slows them down and also his "*sin*" (HAMERTIA - a sin, an offence)? I believe that the author is making a difference between things that are NOT sinful but take too much of our time and things that are sinful that we need to stop doing. But why should believers get rid of things that weigh them down or that are sinful? The answer is because they so "*easily ensnares*" (EUPERISTATOS - trouble, harass, skillfully surrounding) us. These things that weigh us down or the sins that we commit are snares. They cause trouble and harass the believers. In the first part of this verse, the author speaks of the witnesses that surround us. But there are things of weight and sin that surround us also. That is why we need to let go of them and fully embrace the ways of the Lord.

v.1 ... let us run with patient endurance the race that has been set before us,

After setting aside what has been spoken of, the next step is to "*run*" (TRECHO - to run or walk hastily, to strive hard). Then the author speaks of the attitude of the runner, he must do this with "*patient endurance*" (HUPOMONE - hopeful endurance, constancy, not swerving). Patient in the "*race*" (AGON - effort, contention, fight, race) that has

been set "*before*" (PROKEIMAI - to be present, stand forth, set forth) us. God has a plan for every child of his, and it is in this plan that we must move forward. Paul wrote it this way:

#### Ephesians 2

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(RSV)

Jesus said, "Come and follow me." May we never let anything or anyone hinder our daily walk with our beloved Savior. May we also regard everything else as worthless compared to the treasure which is Christ just as Paul taught us.

#### Philippians 3

8 Yes truly, and I am ready to give up all things for the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, which is more than all: for whom I have undergone the loss of all things, and to me they are less than nothing, so that I may have Christ as my reward,

(BBE)

In our next verse the author will explain how we can set aside the weight and sin in our life.

<sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the originator and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The "secret" of being able to have victory in our walk with Christ is easily understood but definitely difficult to constantly apply. We need to "*fix our eyes*" (APHORAO - to consider attentively, to turn away our eyes and look at something else) on Jesus. Stop looking at what you're looking at and turn your eyes toward Jesus. He also tells us why we are to do this.

First it is because Jesus is the "*originator*" (ARCHEGOS - a chief leader, prince, captain, one that takes the lead) and "*perfecter*" (TELEIOTES - a completer, consummator,

finisher) of our faith. What the author is saying is that Jesus is the beginning and the end of our faith. All that our faith needs is in Christ, for he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. No one needs more than Jesus to be spiritually satisfied. Jesus is the source of our salvation and eternal security.

It is written that Jesus saw the "*joy*" (CHARA - cheerfulness, calm delight, gladness) that was set before him. It is the joy of doing the perfect will of the Father that made him able to "*endure*" (HUPOMENO - to stay under, bear, abide, endure) the cross.

v.2 ... disregarding the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus looked forward to the end of the race the Father had given him. He was "*disregarding*" (KATAPHRONEO - to think against, despise, think little of) the "*shame*" (AISCHUNE - shame or disgrace, dishonesty) of being on the cross and suffering a criminal's death. Jesus perfectly ended his ministry here on earth and having the cross now behind him, he has "*sat down*" (KATHIZO - to seat down, to settle, to dwell) at the right hand of the "*throne*" (THRONOS - a stately seat, throne) of God. There is no higher place of honor than to be seated at the right hand of God the Father, and that is where the Son is presently seated.

<sup>3</sup>For consider the one who endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary in your souls *and* give up.

The author exhorts his readers to "*consider*" (ANALOGIZOMAI - to estimate, contemplate, consider) the one, that is Jesus, who "*endures*" (HUPOMENO - to stay under, have, fortitude) such "*hostility*" (ANTILOGIA - dispute, contradiction, strife). The author, for the second time, is telling his readers to fix their eyes on Jesus. He was able to endure, and since all true believers are complete "in him" (Col. 2:10) we are also able to endure our personal cross of being a disciple of Christ.

The hostility that is mentioned came from "*sinners*" (HAMARTOLOS - a sinner, sinful). During all of his public ministry, Jesus endured, over and over again, hostility and even hate from his own people. The religious elite tried to trick him so that they could get some type of conviction against him. Some tried to kill him by stoning (John 10:31,32).

Some found false witnesses to testify against him at his trial. He was whipped, crowned with thorns, mocked, spat upon, and crucified. This is part of what Christ endured from the hostility of sinners. It is written:

John 1:11

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

(NKJV)

But why spend time thinking about all the hostility that Christ endured for us?

v.3 ...so that you will not grow weary in your souls *and* give up.

If believers take time to think about the suffering of the originator and perfecter of their faith, If we meditate on all that Christ endured so that we could receive salvation through our faith in him, surely you will NOT "*grow weary*" (KAMNO - to toil, to tire, be worried) in your "*souls*" (PSUCHE - breath, spirit, mind) and "*give up*" (EKLULO - to relax, to faint, to weaken, to grow weak).

May we all look at Jesus and be strengthened by him. May we remember his promise to all his disciples:

Matthew 11

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

(RSV)

## 41 - *The chastening of the Lord*

Hebrews 12:4-11

<sup>4</sup>You have not yet resisted to the point of *shedding your blood as you* struggle against sin. <sup>5</sup>And have you completely forgotten the exhortation which instructs you as sons?

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
or give up *when you* are corrected by him.

<sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one whom he loves,  
and punishes every son whom he accepts.”

<sup>7</sup>Endure *it* for discipline. God is dealing with you as sons. For what son *is there* whom a father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>But if you are without discipline, in which all *legitimate sons* have become participants, then you are illegitimate and not sons. <sup>9</sup>Furthermore, we have had *our earthly fathers* who disciplined *us*, and we respected *them*. Will we not much rather subject ourselves to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup>For they disciplined *us* for a few days according to what seemed *appropriate* to them, but he *does so* for our benefit, in order that *we* can have a share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup>Now all discipline seems for the moment not to be joyful but painful, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who are trained by it.

(LEB)

This section deals with the relationship between fathers and children. Just as a child needs to sometimes be rebuked by his earthly father, so do spiritual children need to be disciplined by their heavenly Father.

<sup>4</sup>You have not yet resisted to the point of *shedding your blood as you* struggle against sin.

Our battle with sin is not to be taken lightly. It is a spiritual war that believers partake in every single day of their lives. The author writes to the Jewish believers that they have "*not yet*" (OUPO - not yet, hitherto not) "*resisted*" (ANTIKATHISTEMI - withstand, resist, stand against) to the "*point*" (MECHRI - as far as, up to a certain point) of shedding your "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of men or animal). As we have seen in chapter eleven, some did resist up to the point of shedding their blood by not rejecting Christ—which would

be a great sin. But it was not the same for the Jews, to whom the author was writing. The "*struggle*" (ANTAGONIZOMAI - to struggle against, fight) against "*sin*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, offence, sinful) is always difficult. For some sins, victory is simple, but for others, it is like fighting against oneself. Remember what the apostle Paul wrote about his own struggles against sin.

#### Romans 7

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.

17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

(NKJV)

May we understand that following Christ will definitely bring tensions between you and your "old nature".

<sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten the exhortation which instructs you as sons?

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,  
or give up *when you* are corrected by him.

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one whom he loves,  
and punishes every son whom he accepts.”

The author will begin to explain the role our Heavenly Father plays when his children walk in darkness. The writer wonders if his readers have "*completely forgotten*" (EKLANTHANOMAI - to be utterly oblivious of, to forget) the "*exhortation*" (PARAKLESIS - solace, comfort, imploration) which "*instructs*" (DIALEGOMAI - to say thoroughly, reason) you as sons? The person the author is referring to is the Lord God. Have you forgotten what the Lord teaches in the Holy Scriptures, is what the writer is asking. He then writes what he wonders they might have forgotten. The following lines are taken from Pr. 3:11,12.

v. 5 ... "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
or give up *when you* are corrected by him.

<sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one whom he loves,  
and punishes every son whom he accepts."

In verse five, we note that there are two things that you can do when the Lord disciplines you. The first is to "*make light*" (OLIOGOREO - to have little regard for) of the Lord's "*discipline*" (PAIDEIA - tutorage, disciplinary correction). One can shut his ears to what the Lord tells him when he is trying to correct his child's evil ways. Like Israel, who failed to listen to the warnings of God and continued in their idolatry, and were twice sent to exile. The second thing one can do when he is being corrected is to "*give up*" (EKLUO - to relax, to faint, to grow weak, enfeebled). It seems to this person that the chastisement is too great for the sin committed, and he gives up his walk with the Lord. Both of these reactions are incorrect because of the following.

When you are chastised by God, you need to remember that the "*Lord*" (KURIOS - supreme in authority) "*disciplines*" (PAIDEUO - to train up a child, discipline) the ones (that would be the believer) who he loves. In other words, if the Lord God did not love you, he would not take any actions to teach you the right path and allow you to suffer the consequences when you rebuffed him. The second thing to remember is that God not only disciplines those he loves but he also "*punishes*" (MASTIGOO - to flog, scourge) every son (there are no exceptions) whom he "*accepts*" (PARADECHOMAI - to accept near, delight in). You can say that this is what the Lord did with Jonah. He refused to follow God's instructions and was disciplined by finding himself inside a large fish. He was spat out only after he repented! Don't do as Jonah did!

<sup>7</sup>Endure *it* for discipline. God is dealing with you as sons. For what son *is there* whom a father does not discipline?

The author brings three reasons why believers should consider when they are corrected by God. The first is that believers are told to "*endure it*" (HUPOMENO - to remain under, to bear, suffer) for "*discipline*" (PAIDEIA - tutorage, disciplinary correction). There is a reason why you are being disciplined, and that is for tutorage. In other words, God desires to show you the difference between what is right and what is wrong. The Lord is doing a good thing. Not only to you, but for you!

v. 7 ... God is dealing with you as sons.

The second reason is that God is "*dealing*" (PROSPHERO - deal with, present unto) with you as "*sons*" (HUIOS - a son, kinship, child). Here we can see the picture of a caring father who desires to teach his son who got himself into trouble. Because he loves him, he communicates with him and tries to pass on to him words of wisdom.

v.7 ... For what son *is there* whom a father does not discipline?

The third reason is a logical one. For what son is there who a father DOES NOT "*discipline*" (PAIDEUO - to train a child, instruct)? That's what fathers (and mothers) do—they teach their children to act in a moral and civilized manner. God is just doing the same thing, but within the spiritual realm. One should be thankful to the Father for all the care that he manifests towards his child.

<sup>8</sup> But if you are without discipline, in which all *legitimate sons* have become participants, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

The author also desires his readers (because he does not assume that everyone is saved) to think this through. If you are "*without*" (CHORIS - separately or apart, beside) discipline, there is something wrong! Because ALL legitimate sons have become "*participants*" (METOCHOS - a participant, a sharer, associate) in this discipline! If your life passes by without any participation in the discipline of God, then there is something wrong. The author says that it is a sign that you are "*illegitimate*" (NOTHOS - illegitimate son, bastard, born out of wedlock). This means that you are not a child of God, which means that the coming judgment is still upon your shoulders and a terrible verdict awaits, and that is hell!

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we have had *our earthly fathers* who disciplined *us*, and we respected *them*. Will we not much rather subject ourselves to the Father of spirits and live?

In this verse, the author reminds the believers what their attitude towards the Almighty should be. He speaks of their "*earthly fathers*." These two words in Greek translate to

"the flesh of our fathers." When our "*earthly fathers*" "*disciplined*" (PAIDEUTES - a trainer, teacher, corrected) us, what was our attitude? The author writes that we "*respected*" (ENTREPO - to respect, reverence) them. They were our fathers, and we gave them respect, even when we were disciplined.

v.9 ... Will we not much rather subject ourselves to the Father of spirits and live?

Shouldn't we rather "subject" (HUPOTASSO-be under obedience, put under) ourselves to the Father of "spirits" (PNEUMA-a current of air, breath, and spirit) and live? If we respect and honor our fathers, should we not respect and honor our heavenly Father? Yes, we should. It is by subjecting ourselves to our heavenly Father that we will find true life.

<sup>10</sup> For they disciplined *us* for a few days according to what seemed *appropriate* to them, but he *does so* for our benefit, in order that *we* can have a share in his holiness.

The author continues to present arguments for them to think about. He describes why both earthly fathers and the heavenly Father discipline their children. This is food for thought for ourselves also. Our earthly fathers "*disciplined*" (PAIDEUO - to train up a child, instruct) their children for a "*few*" (OLIGOS - puny, short, small, few) days. It was according to what seemed "*appropriate*" (DOKEO - to think, own pleasure, seem good). But what about God? Why does he discipline his children? God does so for our "*benefit*" (SUMPHERO - to collect, profitable). It is certainly not for his own profit, since he is sinless, holy, and perfect in all things. God disciplines his children in order that we can have a "*share*" (METOCHOS - participants, a sharer, associate) in his "*holiness*" (HAGIOTES - sanctity, holiness). God said the following:

1 Peter 1

15 but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;

16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

(RSV)

As a potter with clay so does the Father mold us into the holy image of his Son.

<sup>11</sup> Now all discipline seems for the moment not to be joyful but painful, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who are trained by it.

This is yet another thing that the true believer has to keep in mind when he is being disciplined by his heavenly Father. All "*discipline*" (PAIDEIA - tutorage, chastening) seems for a "moment" (a short amount of time) not to be "*joyful*" (CHARA - cheerfulness, calm delight) but "*painful*" (LUPE - sadness, grief, sorrow). But something happens with time. This painful and sad event of chastisement "*yields*" (APOODIDOMI - to give away, to give up, yield) the "*peaceful*" (EIRENIKOS - pacific, salutary, peaceable) fruit of "*righteousness*" (DIKAIOSUNE - equity of character, righteousness, virtue, purity of life) for those who are "*trained*" (GUMNAZO - to practice, train, exercise) by it.

May we not be discouraged when the good Lord disciplines us but rather understand that his loving hand is telling us that we are not walking as we should.

## 42 - *The pursuit of peace and holiness*

Hebrews 12:12-17

<sup>12</sup>Therefore strengthen your slackened hands and your weakened knees, <sup>13</sup>and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame will not be dislocated, but rather be healed. <sup>14</sup>Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup>Take care *that* no one falls short of the grace of God; *that* no one growing up *like* a root of bitterness causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; <sup>16</sup>*that* no one *be* a sexually immoral or totally worldly *person* like Esau, who for one meal traded his own birthright. <sup>17</sup>For you know that also afterwards, *when he* wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, because he did not find an occasion for repentance, although he sought it with tears.

(LEB)

In this section, the author will give a series of exhortations and also severe warnings. As we have seen, being a disciple of Jesus is demanding and is not meant to be for the faint-hearted.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore strengthen your slackened hands and your weakened knees,

Again we see the word "*therefore*" (DIO - through which thing, consequently, on account of). In our last section, we saw that believers were to respect their heavenly Father even when they are being disciplined. Knowing that the Lord God loves and cares for them. The conclusion to this truth is what follows.

Believers are to "*strengthen*" (ANORTHOO - to straighten up, to lift up, to make straight) their "*slackened*" (PARIEMI - relax, hang down, neglect) hands and their "*weakened*" (PARALUO - to loosen beside, feeble, weak) knees. We can see the general idea of the author. He is picturing a person that is abandoning or that is weary and is about to "fall apart". He lacks encouragement and is no longer capable of functioning spiritually. Please note that it is the believer's responsibility to do something about his condition. The author tells them to strengthen themselves. Yes, fellow believers ought to come to his aide and do what is possible, BUT it is the person that needs to take a

step of faith, stand up, and march forward. The apostle Paul reminded the Philippians of the following:

Philippians 4

13 I am able to do all things through him who gives me strength.  
(BBE)

The author continues to exhort those who are feeble in their faith by writing the following:

<sup>13</sup>and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame will not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

Have you noticed that the author uses body parts to express his thoughts? He speaks of hands, knees, and now feet. Why make "*straight*" (ORTHOS - right, erect, straight, upright) "*paths*" (TROCHIA - a track, a course of conduct, a path) for your feet? If one needs to make straight paths, it is because their paths are NOT straight! In other words, some were not walking in the Lord as they should have. They were walking in darkness by following either their flesh or the world. It seems that they had difficulty following their Lord and Savior the way they should have. Remember what Jesus said about those who would follow him:

John 8

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."  
(NKJV)

There is a reason why they are asked to strengthen themselves in their daily walk with the Lord and it is the following:

v. 13 ...so that what is lame will not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

The reason to strengthen yourself is so that what is "*lame*" (CHOLOS - limping, cripple, lame) will not be "*dislocated*" (EKTREPO - to deflect, turn away, avoid). When a member of your body is dislocated, not only has it become useless, it also hurts all the

time. The idea seems to be that if you DO NOT strengthen yourself in the Lord, you will become like a lame dislocated part of a body (the body of Christ). You will be useless and you will suffer because of this. Instead of remaining in such a position, you should rather desire to be "*healed*" (IAOMAI - to cure, heal, make whole).

<sup>14</sup>Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

In this verse we have two other exhortations. The first is to "*pursue*" (DIOKO - to pursue, follow after, press forward) two things. The first is "*peace*" (EIRENE - to join, peace, rest). It is written five times in the New Testament that our God is a God of peace (Rom. 15:33, 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes 5:23; Heb. 13:20). We also know that God has made peace with us through Jesus Christ, as Paul teaches.

#### Colossians 1

19 For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell,  
20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven,  
making peace by the blood of his cross.

(RSV)

Since God is a God of peace and has made peace with mankind through the sacrifice of Christ at the cross, he expects those who have become his children by adoption to also be peacemakers and peacekeepers.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5

13 And have a high opinion of them in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

(BBE)

The second exhortation is to pursue "*holiness*" (HAGIASMOS - purification, holiness, sanctification). Believers are told to press forward in their walk of holiness. Believers have become holy because of Christ (Eph. 1:4, 5:27; Col. 1:22, 3:12; 1 Thes. 5:27). We are called to live in the holiness that has been given to us through our new birth in Christ Jesus. True believers have become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) and we should walk as lights in this dark world (Mat. 5:14).

v.14 ... without which no one will see the Lord.

Such a grave warning! If we refuse to be peacemakers and to follow holiness, if we live in the flesh and dishonour the Lord God with our lives, we will not "see" (OPTANOMAI - to gaze, observation, watch) the Lord. Everyone will one day "see" the Lord. For some, it will be on judgment day and it will not be joyous. Others, being saved by Christ, will also "see" the Lord, not for eternal judgment but to give an account of ourselves as disciples of Christ (Rom. 14:12).

### 2 Corinthians 5

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

(NKJV)

Believers will never see the Lord favourably if their lives have been wasted. They will be afraid and filled with shame. The idea of "to see God" in Hebrew thought, means to "enjoy God". Any true believer, while he is living on earth, if he chooses to live on the "wide road," will never be able to see God because His hand will stand against him. God has nothing to do with sin and NEVER approves it.

<sup>15</sup>Take care *that* no one falls short of the grace of God; *that* no one growing up *like* a root of bitterness causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

The author continues with his exhortations. This time it deals with the believer's regard towards others. The first is to "take care" (EPISKOPEO - to oversee, to beware, oversight) that NO ONE (not just our friends or those we prefer) "falls short" (HUSTEREO - to be later, inferior, fall short) of the "grace" (CHARIS - the unmerited favor of God) of God. A perfect example of taking care is what James wrote in his epistle.

### James 2

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?  
(RSV)

The idea is to care enough for others to make certain that the grace of God is present in their lives through YOU.

The second is just as serious as the first but in a totally different context.

v.15 ... *that* no one growing up *like* a root of bitterness causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

Believers are to oversee that NO ONE is like a "root" (RHIZA - a root, literally or figuratively) that is "growing up" (PHUO - to swell, to grow, spring up) filled with "bitterness" (PIKRIA - acidity, bitterness, extreme wickedness, hatred). When some people are, they automatically cause "trouble" (ENOCHLEO - to annoy, trouble). Unfortunately, we see this in churches. Instead of forgiving or asking for forgiveness, people are bitter because of certain situations and cause trouble. The result of bitterness in the lives of believers is that many become "defiled" (MIAINO - to sully or taint, defile, pollute) because of this. People with bitterness infest others with their sinful attitude. Disciples of Christ should be worried about such people and approach them with kindness to see if they can help them out of their sin.

<sup>16</sup> *that* no one *be* a sexually immoral or totally worldly *person* like Esau, who for one meal traded his own birthright.

People can also fall short of the grace of God by being "sexually immoral" (PORNOS - a debauchee, whoremonger). We know that marriage is sacred and that any sort of sexual activity or perversion outside of the God-given setting is not acceptable before the Lord. Just think of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). When this happens, believers must repent and turn away from their evil ways.

Still others fall short of the grace of God because they are totally "worldly" (BEBELOS - wicked, a profane person) like Esau. He sees him as totally worldly because for one "meal" (BROSIS - eating, food, meat) he "traded" (APODIDOMI - to give away, give up, sell, yield) his own "birthright" (PROTOTOKIA - primogeniture, the rights or advantages

of the first born son). He traded what God had in store for him just for a bowl of lentils! Esau was truly a worldly man.

<sup>17</sup> For you know that also afterwards, *when he* wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, because he did not find an occasion for repentance, although he sought it with tears.

Here we see what happened to Esau when he realized what a fool he had been by giving away his birthright. This is what happened "*afterwards*" (METEPEITA - thereafter, afterward). There came a time when he wanted to "*inherit*" (KIERONOMEIO - to be an heir, inheritance) the "*blessing*" (EULOGIA - fine speaking, commendation, benediction) he was supposed to receive from his father. But Esau was "*rejected*" (APODOKIMAZO - to disapprove, to repudiate, disallow, reject). His father refused, for the blessing had already gone to his younger brother, Jacob. There was no "*repentance*" (METANOIA - reversal of a decision) on the part of Isaac, the blessing had been given and he would not (could not) take it away from Jacob.

v.17 ... although he sought it with tears.

Even if Esau deeply regretted (we are not certain) giving away his birthright and he "*sought it*" (EKZETEO - to search out, crave, seek diligently) he could not reverse what he had so carelessly done and now he would suffer the consequences for the rest of his life.

May all true believers come to the aid of such people to pursue peace and holiness before it is too late and they also suffer for a lifetime.

### 43 - *The Mountain experience*

Hebrews 12:18-24

<sup>18</sup> For you have not come to something that can be touched, and to a burning fire, and to darkness, and to gloom, and to a whirlwind, <sup>19</sup> and to the noise of a trumpet, and to the sound of words which those who heard begged *that* not *another* word be spoken to them. <sup>20</sup> For they could not endure what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." <sup>21</sup> And the spectacle was so terrifying *that* Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." <sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to tens of thousands of angels, to the festal gathering <sup>23</sup> and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous *people* made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to *the sprinkled blood* that speaks better than Abel's *does*.

(LEB)

We may consider this the last section of his theological teachings which compare the Old covenant (under Moses) and the New covenant (under Jesus Christ). The author will contrast the two covenants by using the imagery of two distinct mounts. The first is Mount Sinai, where the Law was given under Moses (v.18-21). The second is Mount Zion, where grace is given under Jesus the Messiah (v.22-24).

<sup>18</sup> For you have not come to something that can be touched, and to a burning fire, and to darkness, and to gloom, and to a whirlwind,

The "you" are the believers in Christ Jesus. These disciples of Christ had not come to something that could be "*touched*" (PSELAPHAO - to manipulate, feel, handle). This is one of the differences between the two mounts; one is palpable—it is terrestrial. What the author is actually doing is that he is giving a description of Mount Sinai when the people arrived at its footstep (Ex. 19). He is describing the presence of the Almighty towards his people. It is a terrifying sight to look upon the manifestation of the holiness of God.

First we are told of the "*burning*" (KAIO - to set on fire, kindle, burn) fire. This refers to the mountain top that the Lord had set on fire (Ex. 19:18). It was set on fire because "the Lord descended upon it". We can imagine it could have been like a volcano with its fiery top! Here we also see that nothing can withstand the presence of the Lord God.

The second, third, and fourth descriptions speak of "*darkness*" (SKOTOS - shadiness, obscurity, darkness), "*gloom*" (GNOPHOS - gloom, blackness) and a "*whirlwind*" (THUELLA - blowing, storm, tempest). These can be found in Ex. 19:16.

### Exodus 19

16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

(NKJV)

Note the reaction of the people at the foot of Mount Sinai—the entire camp trembled. This is another difference between the two mountains. Mount Sinai is not welcoming, it is frightening and terrifies the people. The Law given at this mount is also frightening because the Law offers no grace. The Law can only condemn those who are under its wing (Rom. 3:19,20).

<sup>19</sup> and to the noise of a trumpet, and to the sound of words which those who heard begged *that not another* word be spoken to them.

The author continues to describe the difference between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. The people of God at the foot of Mount Sinai heard the "*noise*" (ECHOS - a loud or confused sound, roar) of a "*trumpet*" (SALPIGX - a trumpet, to reverberate). Heavenly trumpets blasted their sound in the presence of the Lord. People must have been mystified at what their eyes and ears were witnessing! They also heard the "sound" (PHONE - to emit a sound, call, cry) of "*words*" (RHEMA - an utterance, words). This was the very voice of God speaking from the mountaintop. The noise of the trumpets became very clear as the Lord spoke—the Lord knows how to make himself understood.

v. 19 ...and to the sound of words which those who heard  
begged *that not another* word be spoken to them.

The following is a description of what happened AFTER the Lord God gave the Ten Commandments to his people. This is taken from Exodus chapter twenty:

#### Exodus 20

18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

(NKJV)

The people were so terrified that they "*begged*" (PARAITEOMAI - to beg, supplicate, to ask for) that NOT ANOTHER "*word*" (LOGOS - something said, utterance, word) would be "*spoken*" (PROSTITHEMI - to speak any more). The people could not bear to hear the voice of God, and they begged Moses to tell God to stop speaking (Ex. 20:19). Seeing the presence of God and hearing his words were too much for the people. It is almost impossible to imagine what they saw and heard.

<sup>20</sup> For they could not endure what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned."

This verse is also taken from the same terrifying event.

#### Exodus 19

10 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments,  
11 and be ready by the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.  
12 And you shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death;

13 no hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain."

(RSV)

The author continues to demonstrate the condemnation that breaking God's will brings on the sinner. The Law was so strict that even if an "*animal*" (THERION - a dangerous animal, a wild beast) "*touches*" (THIGGANO - to handle, touch, manipulate) the mountain, it must be "*stoned*" (LITHOBOLEO - to throw stones, lapidate). If a beast died because it touched the sacred mountain, how dangerous it must be for people to do so!

<sup>21</sup>And the spectacle was so terrifying *that* Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling."

The "*spectacle*" (PHANTAZO - to make apparent, to appear, sight) of the burning mountain top, trumpets and voice of God was so "*terrifying*" (PHOBEROS - frightful, fearful, terrible) that Moses said, "I am *terrified*" (EKPHOBOS - frighten out of one's wits, struck with terror) and "*trembling*" (ENTROMOS - quake, to tremble). Even Moses was just as shaken and petrified as all the other Hebrews were (Deut. 9:19)! Surely that says a lot about this event. As I said, the giving of the Law was an experience that was not welcomed by the people. No one was ready for this!

Having finished describing the giving of the Covenant of the Law through Moses, the author now turns to the Covenant of grace through Jesus.

<sup>22</sup>But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to tens of thousands of angels, to the festal gathering

<sup>23</sup>and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous *people* made perfect, <sup>24</sup>and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and *to the sprinkled blood*<sup>[1]</sup> that speaks better than Abel's *does*.

The Hebrew believers had NOT COME to Mount Sinai but they HAVE COME to "*mount*" (OROS - to rise, mount, mountain) "*Zion*" (SION - a hill of Jerusalem). Mount Zion became known under the name of the "City of David". It was a city of the Jebusites until David conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6-9). If the Jewish people came to Mount Sinai,

which was palpable, Mount Zion differed and was not terrestrial. It was the "*city*" (POLIS - a town with walls, city) of the "*living*" (ZAO - to live, life time) God. Not the earthly Jerusalem but the "*heavenly*" (EPOURANIOS - above the sky, celestial) Jerusalem. The first covenant is of the earth and the second is of heaven. The author describes this Mount Zion as he did with Mount Sinai. First we see that there are "*tens of thousands*" (MURIAS - an indefinite number, unlimited number) of "*angels*" (AGGELOS - a messenger, an angel). We know that there are countless angels in the heavens.

Rev. 5:11

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,  
(NKJV)

The author continues,

<sup>23</sup> and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous *people* made perfect

In the New Jerusalem we have the "*assembly*" (PANEGURIS - a festival gathering) of the "*first born*" (PROTOTOKOS - first-born, first begotten). The author is describing the church. True believers are part of the gathering in Christ Jesus, who was the first born. He is directly called the firstborn seven times in the New Testament (Mat. 1:25; Luke 2:7; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15,18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5). This great assembly of believers is "*enrolled*" (APOGRAPHO - to write off, enroll) in heaven.

These believers will be in the presence of God, who is the "*judge*" (KRITES - a judge) of all. This might have been written to refresh the memory of the Jewish believers that one day (as with all believers) they too will be judged for what they have done with the capacities they have been given to use in God's vineyard.

v.23 ... and to the spirits of righteous *people* made perfect

In the assembly of the firstborn the saints who have "passed on" are also going to be present. They have become righteous because of Christ (Rom. 10:4) and have become "*perfect*" (TELEIOO - to complete, finish, perfect) in the sight of God (Col. 1:28).

<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and *to the sprinkled blood* that speaks better than Abel's *does*.

Finally, Jesus will also be at this heavenly gathering for he is the "*mediator*" (MESITES - a go-between, reconciler) of a new covenant (the covenant of grace). The "sprinkled blood" speaks of the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, which purchases the believer (Acts 20:28) and is a propitiation for our sins (Rom. 3:25). The blood of Christ speaks "*better*" (KREITTON - stronger, better, nobler) than Abel's. This is a reference to the sacrifice of Abel, which cannot be compared to the perfect and eternal sacrifice of Jesus (Heb. 10:10-14).

## 44 - Warning against defying God

Hebrews 12:25-29

<sup>25</sup> Watch out that you do not refuse the one who is speaking! For if those did not escape *when they* refused the one who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape, if we* reject the *one who warns* from heaven, <sup>26</sup> whose voice shook the earth at that time, but now he has promised, saying, "Yet once *more* I will shake not only the earth but also heaven."

<sup>27</sup> Now the *phrase* "yet once *more*" indicates the removal of what is shaken, namely, things that have been created, in order that the things that are not shaken may remain. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, *since we* are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be thankful, through which let us serve God acceptably, with awe and reverence. <sup>29</sup> For indeed our God *is* a consuming fire.

(LEB)

In our present section, the author will issue a severe warning that Christians throughout the centuries should take very seriously.

<sup>25</sup> Watch out that you do not refuse the one who is speaking! For if those did not escape *when they* refused the one who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape, if we* reject the *one who warns* from heaven,

We are told to "*watch out*" (BIEPO - to look at, behold, perceive). What he has written is to be thought through and meditated upon. This is even more pressing for our present generation since we live in a world where people normally do not take time to reflect, even on important issues. But what are these Hebrews to "*watch out*" for? It is that you DO NOT "*refuse*" (PARAITEOMAI - decline, shun, avoid) the one (that would be God) who is speaking. In other words, do not turn your back on what you have learned. Do not shut your ears to the Almighty. Then the author gives an example of what is meant.

He speaks of certain people who "*refused*" (PARAITEOMAI - decline, shun, avoid) the one (God) who "*warned*" (CHREMATIZO - to utter an oracle, speak, reveal) them on

earth. Because of this they were not able to "*escape*" (PHEUGO - to run away, escape, flee). How many times has the Lord sent prophets to Israel and yet they did not listen to them? How many times were they beaten and captured by their enemies? How many wars were lost? They were even deported twice from their own country! All of this is because they hardened their hearts and shut their ears towards the Lord God. Even when God, in his grace, helped them out of critical situations, it did not take long for them to return to their idolatry.

v. 25 ... much less *will we escape, if we reject the one who warns* from heaven,

The author reminds his readers that if they also "*reject*" (APOSTREPHO - to turn away, to defect, deserting) the one (God) who "*warns*" (LALEO - to talk, utter words, speak) them from "*heaven*" (OURANOS - the sky, heaven) how "*much*" (POLUS - more, in a greater degree, abundant) less will they "*escape*" (PHEUGO - to run away, escape, flee). In other words, if, in the past, people who heard the warnings from God DID NOT escape the penalty for doing this, how much more will YOU not escape either!

<sup>26</sup> whose voice shook the earth at that time, but now he has promised, saying,  
"Yet once *more* I will shake not only the earth but also heaven."

The author reminds his readers of the absolute power the Lord God has over his creation and that nothing or anyone can thwart his desires. Whose "*voice*" (PHONE - language, noise, sound, voice) "*shook*" (SALEUO - to waver, rock, shake) the earth at that time. This must be when the Lord spoke from Mount Sinai and gave the Ten Commandments to his people. The author brings to thought a "*promise*" (EPAGGELLO - to announce upon, profess, promise) God had given. He promised that not only would he "*shake*" (SEIO - to quake, rock, shake) the earth but also "*heaven*" (OURANOS - the sky, heaven). This phrase was taken from the following small prophet:

#### Haggai 2

5 according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit abides among you; fear not.

6 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land;

(RSV)

May we also remember what the apostle Peter wrote about what the Lord will do with the entire universe, not just the earth!

### 2 Peter 3

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; and in that day the heavens will be rolled up with a great noise, and the substance of the earth will be changed by violent heat, and the world and everything in it will be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things are coming to such an end, what sort of persons is it right for you to be, in all holy behaviour and righteousness,

12 Looking for and truly desiring the coming of the day of God, when the heavens will come to an end through fire, and the substance of the earth will be changed by the great heat?

(BBE)

May every believer's ears heed to the warnings of the Lord God.

<sup>27</sup> Now the *phrase* "yet once *more*" indicates the removal of what is shaken, namely, things that have been created, in order that the things that are not shaken may remain.

The author continues and explains what is meant by the "shaking" of heaven and earth. He lingers on the phrase "yet once more" and enlightens his readers. This phrase "*indicates*" (DELOO - to make plain, declare, signify) the "*removal*" (METATHESIS - change, removing, translation) of what is shaken. At this point, the author is speaking of the entire universe and confirms this with the next phrase. Things that have been "*created*" (POIEO - to make or do, work). So the universe that has been shaken will be removed. This concurs with what Peter wrote (2 Peter 3:10-12). It seems that the author will disclose the things that did not shake that remained.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, *since we* are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be thankful, through which let us serve God acceptably, with awe and reverence.

What will remain is an "*unshakable*" (ASALEUTOS - unshakable, immovable) "*kingdom*" (BASILEIA - royalty, rule, kingdom)-that is the kingdom of God. We know that in the end times, the Lord God will destroy this sin-filled universe and create a new one where he will dwell with his people in the New Jerusalem. Knowing this great favor that the Lord is giving to the redeemed, what should they do—what should all true believers do?

v.28 ... let us be thankful, through which let us serve God acceptably, with awe and reverence.

First of all, believers are called to be "*thankful*". The Greek text says, "let us have grace." Have "grace" to "*serve*" (LATREIA - ministration of God, worship) God. Do you remember what God told Moses to tell Pharaoh when he was going to go and see him?

Ex 7:16

"And you shall say to him, 'The LORD God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; but indeed, until now you would not hear!

(NKJV)

Now all those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ will truly be able to serve God "*acceptably*" (EUARESTOS - quite agreeably, please well). There will be NO MORE sin in us and around us to hinder our true worship and perfect service. This will be done with "*awe*" (EULABEIA - caution, dread, fear) and "*reverence*" (AIDOS - bashfulness, respect, reverence).

<sup>29</sup> For indeed our God *is* a consuming fire.

The author ends with the reason why they should be listening to the Lord's warnings. It is because God is a "*consuming*" (KATANALISKO - to consume utterly) "*fire*" (PUR - fire, lightning). He refers once again to how the Lord manifested himself at the top of Mount Sinai.

May we also have ears to listen to what the Lord tells us.

*45 - Exhortations to manifest love*

Hebrews 13:1-3

**13** Brotherly love must continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect hospitality, because through this some have received angels as guests without knowing *it*. <sup>3</sup> Remember the prisoners, *as though you were* fellow-prisoners; *remember* the mistreated, *as though you yourselves* also are being *mistreated* in the body.  
(LEB)

Chapter thirteen of the epistle of Hebrews contains a series of encouragements and exhortations in relationship to Christian living. It is no wonder that the author begins with what can be the most important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ in relationship with people, and that is to manifest love to them. Are we not to be a reflection of God's Son to others?

<sup>1</sup> Brotherly love must continue.

If there is one thing that must "*continue*" (MENO - abide, continue, stay) in the life of the true believer, it is "*brotherly love*" (PHILADELPHIA - fraternal affection, love of the brethren). When the bible speaks of being the light of the world or the salt of the earth, this can be manifested by loving one another. In the context we are reading, the author is placing emphasis on loving the brothers and sisters in the faith. As we read elsewhere, our love for others IS NOT limited to those of the same faith. In fact, Jesus teaches us that there is nothing impressive about loving or being kind to those who you naturally care for.

Matthew 5

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.  
(NKJV)

Please note that the author says that brotherly love is to "continue." This gives the idea that people are manifesting love towards one another and they should carry on. We may sometimes be tempted to retain our love because of irritation or some disagreement, but believers shouldn't. Remember that even on the cross, Christ loved those around him and brought redemption to one of the crucified criminals.

It may be that the author remembers the words of Jesus when he said the following:

John 13

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

(RSV)

Loving one another is the "birthmark" of all true born-again believers. Jesus tells his disciples that it is by this that people will be able to distinguish if you are a true disciple of his. Being a loving person is one of the best ways to evangelize those around you. They not only need to hear (Acts 15:7) but also need to see (1 John 3:11) the gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup>Do not neglect hospitality, because through this some have received angels as guests without knowing *it*.

The second though in this short section is a natural extension of loving others and that is hospitality. The author is giving a commandment that we should all follow. DO NOT, so this is something that we are not to "*neglect*" (EPILANTHANOMAI - to lose out of mind, to neglect, no longer care for) "*hospitality*" (PHILONEXIA - hospitality, to

entertain strangers). In the New Testament times, it would not be unusual to have travelling evangelists, or teachers and preachers, that would go from one town to another, spreading the Good News and exhorting the brethren in the faith. These believers needed the hospitality of Christians for their upkeep while in their villages. They needed a place to rest and sleep, as well as food for their sustenance. We do the same today when missionaries need billeting for a day or two. They stay in our homes and enjoy the company of likeminded believers.

v.2 ... because through this some have received angels as guests without knowing *it*.

Believers should be welcoming not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because you never know who your guests are! The author writes that through hosting "*some*" (TIS - some or any person or object) have "*received*" (XENIZO - to be a host, lodge) "*angels*" (AGGELOS - a messenger, an angel) without "*knowing it*" (LANTHANO - to hide, to be ignorant, unaware). Just as Lot hosted angels (Gen. 19), others might also. Whether angels or humans, the reward for hosting strangers will always remain.

#### Mark 9

41 Whoever gives you a cup of water, because you are Christ's, truly I say to you, he will in no way be without his reward.

(BBE)

The third aspect of loving one another is considering those who are in prison because of their faith in Christ Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> Remember the prisoners, as *though you were* fellow-prisoners; *remember* the mistreated, as *though you yourselves* also are being *mistreated* in the body.

This is the third thing to remember. The first is to love another, the second is to manifest hospitality, and the third also deals with the brethren, not to forget those who are held captive because of their faith. The author begins with the word "*remember*" (MIMNESKO - to remind, to recall, to be mindful) the "*prisoners*" (DESMIOS - a captive in bonds, prisoner). Because these brethren are out of sight, it is easy to forget about them. There is an old adage that says, "Out of sight, out of mind." It is as true today as it was when this epistle was written.

But how are believers supposed to remember these prisoners? The author gives us two ideas on how you can remember them. The first is as though you were "*fellow prisoners*" (SUNDEO - to bind with, fellow-prisoner). In other words, the author desires these believers to put themselves in the shoes of those imprisoned for Christ and to imagine the hardships and loneliness they experience. Try to imagine the shackles, hunger, cold, and loneliness they are suffering from. When we do this, it is easier to have an open heart for them and pray and provide for them.

v.3 ... *remember* the mistreated, as *though* you yourselves also are being *mistreated* in the body.

The second thing to remember is how they are "*mistreated*" (KAKOUCHEO - to maltreat, torment). Most prisons in Roman times were filled with people who were waiting to be tried or executed. Some, like the apostle Paul, who was a Roman citizen, were imprisoned, but it was what is called a "house arrest". As for the others, they were in dungeons. Roman prisoners needed help from people on the outside for most of their care, comfort, and nourishment. Because of the great number of Christian prisoners, the author reminds the believers on the "outside" to care for those who are chained because of their faith. He writes to "*remember*" (MIMNESKO - to remind, to recall, to be mindful) the "*mistreated*" (KAKOUCHEO - to maltreat, torment) as though YOU yourselves were also being mistreated in the "*body*" (DOMA - the body as a whole). Believers should try to imagine how your body would feel if it were mistreated as theirs are. There is also another view of the phrase "*being mistreated in the body*". It could also give the idea that since they are in the same body as you are (body of Christ), it is natural that you take care of the part of the body of Christ that is suffering in prison for their faith.

## 46 - Various reminders

### Hebrews 13:4-6

<sup>4</sup>Marriage *must be* held in honor by all, and the marriage bed *be* undefiled, because God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers. <sup>5</sup>Your lifestyle *must be* free from the love of money, being content with what you have. For he himself has said, "I will never desert you, and I will never abandon you." <sup>6</sup>So then, we can say with confidence,

"The Lord *is* my helper, I will not be afraid.  
What will man do to me?"  
(LEB)

In this section, the author will bring up two important reminders. We will see that time has not changed things at all. These two subjects are the two most common items that break marriages today.

<sup>4</sup>Marriage *must be* held in honor by all, and the marriage bed *be* undefiled, because God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers.

This is the first subject: "*marriage*" (GAMOS - nuptials, marriage, wedding). Marriage was instituted by the Lord God in the Garden of Eden when he presented Eve to Adam and they became one flesh. The institution of marriage is a present reality in every country around the world. It is the foundation for families and society itself. In marriage, both the husband and wife participate within their God-given capacities.

What is said about marriage is that it **MUST** be held in "*honor*" (TIMIOS - valuable, honored, beloved, dear) by ALL. In other words, every person who engages in marriage is obliged to honour their vows spoken before the Lord and the invited guests. Not only held in honor by the wives but by ALL. Not only held in honor by the husbands but by ALL. It is the responsibility of the man and the woman to do their part in honouring their marriage. They are to protect it from all harm and be diligent not to allow disruptive elements to creep in and splinter the relationship between husband and wife.

The author brings two things that are some of the worst enemies and destructive elements that infect marriages. The first is the marriage "*bed*" (KOITE - a couch, cohabitation, bed), which must remain "*undefiled*" (AMIANOTOS - unsoiled, pure, undefiled). It is not and never was in God's plan for a man or a woman to have multiple sexual partners in a marriage. The man and the woman are to remain sexually faithful to each other. Just as God the Father had one bride, Israel (Isaiah 50:1; Jer. 3:8), and God the Son had one bride, the church (Revelation 19:7-9), man and woman must have one spouse. When a man or a woman becomes "one" with a person outside marriage, then his/her marriage bed is defiled.

v.4 ... because God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers.

Marriage must remain undefiled because God will "*judge*" (KRINO - to distinguish, condemn, punish, judge) those who are "*sexually immoral*" (PORNOS - a male prostitute, a debauchee, a fornicator) and "*adulterers*" (MOICHOS - a male paramour, adulterer). The hand of God is against the one who does these things, whether it is a man or a woman.

<sup>5</sup>Your lifestyle *must be* free from the love of money, being content with what you have. For he himself has said, "I will never desert you, and I will never abandon you."

This is the second factor that causes marriage breakups, and that is money matters. The author tells the believers that their "*lifestyle*" (PROPOS - manner of life, character) must be free of the "*love of money*" (APHILARGUROS - not greedy, not avaricious). This is good for those who are married and those who are not. Paul wrote about the love of money also:

#### 1 Timothy 6

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.

(RSV)

It is not having money or being very wealthy that is a sin; it is the LOVE of money that is wrong. Remember what Jesus said:

Luke 16

13 No man may be a servant to two masters: for he will have hate for the one and love for the other; or he will keep to the one and have no respect for the other. You may not be servants of God and of wealth.

14 And the Pharisees, who had a great love of money, hearing these things, were making sport of him.

(BBE)

The author gives the remedy to the love of money and all the problems that it brings.

v.5 ... being content with what you have. For he himself has said, "I will never desert you, and I will never abandon you."

Instead of desiring more and more money, why not "*be content*" (ARKEO - to be content, suffice, enough, to be satisfied) with what you have? The reason for this is taken from Deut. 31:6;

Deuteronomy 31

6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

(NKJV)

It is a promise. God will never "*desert*" (AIEMI - to let up, desist, leave) you, and I will never "*abandon*" (EGKATALEIPO - to leave behind, to desert, totally abandoned) you. The context here deals with God not turning his back on his children when they are in a difficult financial situation. It is also true for the other aspects of our lives. The redeemed need to place their confidence in the Lord and not in the money they might have.

<sup>6</sup>So then, we can say with confidence,  
"The Lord *is* my helper, I will not be afraid.  
What will man do to me?"

The author comes to this conclusion knowing what has just been said concerning the Lord God and money matters. First we see that the conclusion can be said with "*confidence*" (THARRHEO - to exercise courage, be bold). This gives us the idea that this statement is profoundly believed and trusted. The "*Lord*" (KURIOS - supreme in authority) is my "*helper*" (BOETHOS - a succor, helper). This Greek word is an hapax and is only used once in the New Testament. The Lord is my helper in the sense that He comes to our aid, not that He is our servant! Since He comes to our aid, the believer's reaction should be that he "*will not be afraid*" (PHOBEO - to frighten, to be alarmed, terrified). If God can do anything, He surely can provide for my needs, therefore I should rest in the Lord.

v.6 ... What will man do to me?"

This phrase is taken from the following verse:

Psalms 118

6 With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can man do to me?

(RSV)

There is nothing (without God's permission) that man can do to you because you have become his child through the precious sacrifice of Christ at the cross. Jesus said that all of his disciples are protected by their heavenly Father:

John 10

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;  
28 and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

(RSV)

## 47 - *General conclusion and directives*

### Hebrews 13:7-17

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods by which those who participate have not benefited. 10 We have an altar from which those who serve in the tabernacle do not have the right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sins are burned up outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, in order that he might sanctify the people by his own blood. 13 So we must go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For here we do not have a permanent city, but we seek the city that is to come. 15 Therefore through him let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 And do not neglect doing good and generosity, for God is pleased with such sacrifices. 17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.

(LEB)

We are coming to the close of this epistle, and the author is concluding with a few more teachings.

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith.

In the first verse, believers are asked to "*remember*" (MNEMONEUO - to exercise memory, mindful, keep in mind) your "*leaders*" (HEGEOMAI - to lead, official authority, chief). The leaders that the author has in mind are those who "*spoke*" (LALEO - to talk, utter words, say) the word of God to you. These would be the people who taught and disciplined believers in their newfound faith. They may also have preached the word when they gathered together. Here we see the importance of having the right

spiritually gifted people to minister as teachers. They need to be proper examples of what true believers are. I say this because the author continues and writes that people should be "*considering*" (ANTHEOREO - to look again, behold, consider) the "*outcome*" (EKBASIS - to go out, exit, escape) of their "*way of life*" (ANASTROPHE - behaviour, conduct, manner of life). These leaders who teach, not only need to know their theology, but their lives must reflect what they teach. These, and only these, are to be remembered. Believers are to "*imitate*" (MIMEOMAI - to imitate, follow) their "*faith*" (PISTIS - persuasion, credence, moral conviction). We are to imitate only the faithful disciples of Christ who manifest in speech and action the reality of pure religion.

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

One might wonder why the author has placed this statement, which seems out of place, between what would become verse seven and verse nine. It really does not seem to fit with the context. Unless we understand that since we are called to follow the lives of these leaders we must remember that they should imitate Jesus. The author is reminding his readers that imitating Jesus does not change with time, for he is the same "*yesterday*" (CHTHES - in time past, yesterday) and "*today*" (SEMERON - on this day, now, at present) and "*forever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, never ending). NO ONE can say, "Jesus would have acted differently today" or "Things are different now." To imitate Jesus is to think and live as he lived in the New Testament times.

9 Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods by which those who participate have not benefited.

The author will now give a new set of directives which I personally find difficult to seize to the fullest. The next few verses may have been the most difficult for me to understand and explain in the entire epistle!

Believers are called not to be "*carried away*" (PERIPHERO - to convey around, carry about) by "*various*" (POIKILOS - motley, various, divers, manifold) and "*strange*" (XENOS - foreign, alien) "*teachings*" (DIDACHE - instruction, doctrine, teaching). This command is certainly precious for today. There are so many false teachers and preachers that pollute the internet, written page, and churches. They teach false

doctrines, have new ideas, and say they receive messages from angels and even the Lord! But what they teach DOES NOT agree with the Holy Scriptures. Even in the first generation of believers, these false teachers were everywhere to be found. The authors of the New Testament issue warning after warning about them. Listen to what Paul says about them:

### Galatians 1

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

(NKJV)

The author carries on his teaching with the following:

v.9 ... for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods by which those who participate have not benefited.

The author will begin to teach how believers should be encouraged. It is first of all "good" (KALOS - good, valuable, virtuous, worthy) for the "heart" (KARDIA - to thoughts or feelings of the mind) to be "strengthened" (BEBAIIOO - to stabilize, make certain, confirm) by "grace" (CHARIS - benefit, unmerited favour of God, gift). Edification is possible through the grace of God. It is by the active grace of God in the believer that enables him to grow in spiritual wisdom. Then he says that it is NOT by "foods" (BROMA - food, meats, victuals, that which is eaten) that those who participate (we will see who they are) have NOT "benefited" (OPHELEO - to be useful, benefit, prevail).

10 We have an altar from which those who serve in the tabernacle do not have the right to eat.

Here the author will begin to introduce the ones for whom the foods have NOT profited. He speaks of those who "serve" (LATREUO - to minister to God) in the "tabernacle" (SKENE - a tent or cloth hut, habitation). The author is referring (as he did in the past) to the priests and high priests who served God under the Old Covenant. He says that believers in Christ Jesus have an "altar" (THUSIASTERION - a place of sacrifice,

altar) from where they DO NOT have the "*right*" (EXOUSIA - force, capacity, authority, power) to "*eat*" (PHAGO - to eat, eat meat, to take food).

The author speaks of two different covenants, two different sacrifices, and two different tables from which to eat. In the Old Covenant, the priests and high priests were allowed to eat from the "table" of the sacrificed animals. A portion could be kept and eaten by the priest who had offered it to the Lord God. In the New Covenant, true believers are called to eat from the "Lord's table" where bread and wine are served. In the Old Covenant, it is the fruit of the sacrifice of animals, and in the New Covenant, it is the fruit of the perfect and eternal sacrifice of the Messiah at the cross.

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

The author speaks of the animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant. The "*bodies*" (SOMA - the body as a whole) of those animals (those who were sacrificed) whose "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of humans or animals) is brought into the "*sanctuary*" (HAGION - a sacred thing, holy place), this is probably the holy of holies, for "*sins*" (HAMARTIA - a sin, an offense, violation of the divine law). The carcasses of the sacrificed animals were "*burned*" (KATAKAIIO - to burn to the ground) outside the camp. They were not to remain within the camp because they had become "cursed".

12 Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, in order that he might sanctify the people by his own blood.

If you have ever wondered why Jesus died outside the gates of Jerusalem and not somewhere in the city, here is the answer. Since the sacrifice under the Old Covenant was done outside the camp, it had to be so with the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. It is written "*therefore*" (DIO - through which things, consequently) Jesus also "*suffered*" (PASCHO - painful impression, suffer, vex) outside the "*gate*" (PULE - a gate way, porch, door-way). Jesus was sacrificed at the cross in order that he might "*sanctify*" (HAGIAZO - to make holy, consecrate) the people (the true believers) by his own "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of humans or animals).

As the sacrifices of animals were a shadow of things to come (Heb. 8:5; 10:1) Jesus died to sanctify all those who would come with a repentant heart and ask forgiveness of

their sins. ONLY the blood of Jesus can perfectly cleanse the repentant person for all time (Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

13 So we must go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach.

The author told the believers that they must imitate those who taught them. Now he teaches that they must also "*go out*" (EXERCHOMAI - to issue, come or go forth, escape) to him (Jesus). Believers must also follow Jesus "*outside*" (EXO - outside, outward) the camp and be willing to be "*bearing*"(PHERO - to bear or carry, uphold) his "*reproach*" (ONEIDISMOS - reproach, reproof, rebuke). True believers are the ones who do not hesitate to reflect Jesus Christ in their lives, even though this will bring them suffering and require them to follow their Master. Remember what Jesus said:

Matthew 10

38 and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.  
(RSV)

In our following verse the author is reminding the Jewish believers of the following:

14 For here we do not have a permanent city, but we seek the city that is to come.

He reminds them of a simple truth that we must all keep in mind. It is the fact that we DO NOT have a "*permanent*" (HODE - in this same spot, this place) city. This earth is not our home, we are but pilgrims passing through for a little while. Just as the Hebrews spent forty years in the desert before arriving in the Promise Land, so believers of the New Covenant are just passing through and are heading for their heavenly home.

John 14

1 Let not your heart be troubled: have faith in God and have faith in me.

2 In my Father's house are rooms enough; if it was not so, would I have said that I am going to make ready a place for you?

3 And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to be with me, so that you may be where I am.

(BBE)

Our home is not of this world but we "*seek*" (EPIZETEO - to search, inquire, desire) the city that is "*to come*" (MELLO - to be about to be, shall be). This city is the one that is described in the Book of Revelation and is called the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2). May we never be satisfied with just living here on earth but have this living hope to be with our Lord in his paradise.

15 Therefore through him let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.

What should Christians do until Christ returns or our bodies die? First, they are to follow the faith of their teachers. Second, they are to accept and bear the reproach of their Savior. Third, they are to seek the city that is to come. Now we are presented with a fourth thing that is to be done and that is to "*offer up*" (ANAPHERO - to take up, offer up, bring) a "*sacrifice*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice) of "*praise*" (AINESIS - the act of praising, a thank offering) "*continually*" (DIAPANTOS - through all time, constantly). In whatever situation we find ourselves, we are to thank and praise the name of the Lord. Not only in the good times but also in the more difficult ones. Our hearts should be filled with songs of praise and adoration.

The sacrifice of praise is the "*fruit*" (KARPOS - a fruit) of lips that "*confess*" (HOMOLOGEO - profess, confess, give thanks) his "*name*" (ONOMA - a name and all it represents). Our lips can offer sacrifices of praise, glory, and honor, as we see it done in the following verses:

#### Revelation 5

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever. (NKJV)

The author continues with his directives and returns to the relationship within the brethren.

16 And do not neglect doing good and generosity, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.

He begins with DO NOT. This is an imperative, a command to all the believers. Do not "*neglect*" (EPILANTHANOMAI - to lose out of mind, neglect, no longer caring for) doing "*good*" (EUPOIIA - well doing, beneficence) and "*generosity*" (KOINONIA - fellowship, social intercourse, to share with what one has). In other words, the author desires the brethren to remember to take care of each other, to provide for those who have less, or the weak and elderly. But why should a believer never forget to do these things? Because God is "*pleased*" (EUARESTO - to gratify entirely) with such "*sacrifices*" (THUSIA - a sacrifice). We have seen that the believer is to offer sacrifices from his lips, and now it is from his hands by helping others who are in need.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.

For some reason, the author returns to the subject of leaders, as in verse seven. We need to remember our leaders (v.7) and now we are taught to "*obey*" (PEITHO - persuade, trust, yield) and "*submit*" (HIPEIKO - to be weak, to surrender, to resist no longer) to them. I believe that we are to trust and obey our church leaders AS LONG as what they are asking of us reflects the character of God and is in line with biblical teachings in their proper context.

The author also gives the reason why people ought to do this. It is because they "*keep watch*" (AGRUPNEO - to be sleepless, to watch) over your "*souls*" (PSUCHE - breath, spirit, soul). They watch over you as shepherds constantly watch over their flock. They are always on the lookout for wolves and other beasts who might want to harm them.

v. ... as those who will give an account

This is a stern warning to all the leaders of God's local churches. ALL the leaders will have to "give" (APODIDOMI - to give away, give up) an "account" (LOGOS - something said, discourse). One day, all of God's servants will be called to give an account of their work in God's vineyard. Jesus spoke a parable concerning this grave moment in Mat. 25:14-30. May all who are in leadership positions reflect on the standards that are placed on your shoulders - you are to take care of God's children.

v. 17 ... so that they can do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.

There is a reason why people should obey and submit to their leaders. It is so that they can work with "joy" (CHARA - cheerfulness, gladness, joy) and not with "groaning" (STENAZO - to sigh, murmur, groan. It is very difficult to be a good spiritual leader. Remember Moses and how the people often complained against him and Aaron. This did not help them to do a better job, but simply made it a heavier burden to carry. The author ends by saying that if you were rebels at heart against the leadership, this would be "unprofitable" (ALUSITELES - gainless, hurtful, unbeneficial) for you.

## 48 - Closing requests and benediction

Hebrews 13:18-25

<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are convinced that we have a good conscience, *and* want to conduct ourselves commendably in every *way*. <sup>19</sup> And I especially urge *you* to do this, so that I may be restored to you more quickly.

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> equip you with every good *thing* to do his will, carrying out in us *what is* pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory *forever*. Amen.

<sup>22</sup> Now I urge you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for indeed I have written to you *briefly*. <sup>23</sup> Know *that* our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I will see you, if he comes quickly *enough*. <sup>24</sup> Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. <sup>25</sup> Grace *be* with all of you.

(LEB)

We have come to the final section of the book of Hebrews. It is divided into three parts: the request, the benediction, and the conclusion.

### The request.

<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are convinced that we have a good conscience, *and* want to conduct ourselves commendably in every *way*. <sup>19</sup> And I especially urge *you* to do this, so that I may be restored to you more quickly.

The request has to do with prayer. The author writes "*pray*" (PROSEUCHOMAI - to pray to God, supplicate) for "us". We really don't know who the "us" is. The only name that is given is that of Timothy (v.23) but we do not know how he is mentioned or if he was a co-worker with the author at the time. Prayer is always essential in a believer's life. What is to be noted is that prayer is sought by the author. He knows that prayers are heard by the Almighty and that they can have a beneficial effect on the lives of others.

A statement is made concerning the person who wrote this epistle and those around him and that is that they are "*convinced*" (PEITHO - to convince, to asset, to rely, trust) that we have a "*good*" (KALOS - beautiful, good, worthy) "*conscience*" (SUNEIDESIS - co-perception, sense of right and wrong). Conscience is a God-given ability to distinguish right from wrong. Unfortunately, our conscience has been marred by sin and has lost its spiritual bearing. When a person is born-again, the Holy Spirit lives in him and renews his mind (Rom. 12:1,2) and his conscience is daily cleansed from the darkness that once reigned in it. A warning must be given, for if the believer turns away from the Lord, his conscience will automatically return to its former state, as we see in these verses.

#### 1 Timothy 1

18 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,  
19 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,  
20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.  
(NKJV)

We see in the following phrase what a good conscience leads the believer to do.

v.18 ... *and* want to conduct ourselves commendably in every way.

Notice that they "*want*" (THELO - to determine, choose, prefer) to "*conduct*" (ANASTREPHO - to overturn, remain, live, to conduct one's self) ourselves "*commendably*" (KALOS - morally well, honestly). The desire of their hearts pushes them to live in all honesty in every way. There is something wrong with a person who says that he/she is a Christian but their lives are not commendable.

<sup>19</sup> And I especially urge *you* to do this, so that I may be restored to you more quickly.

We can see that the author manifests his true desire for the prayers of the brethren by the following: He writes, I especially "*urge*" (PARAKALEO - to call near, invite, exhort, entreat) you "*to do this*" (POIEO - to make or do, cause). He's asking believers to pray

for him, but why? So that I may be "*restored*" (APOKATHISTEMI - to reconstitute, to restore to its former state) to you "*more quickly*" (TACHION - more swiftly, outrun, sooner). What we can understand is that the author may be imprisoned or caught-up in a difficult situation over which he has no control and asks for prayer so that he may be released from his circumstances.

## The benediction.

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup> equip you with every good *thing* to do his will, carrying out in us *what is* pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory *forever*. Amen.

At the end of his letter, the author offers a benediction to his brothers and sisters. It focuses on the "*God*" (THEOS - the one true God, creator and sustainer) of "*peace*" (EIRENE - peace, quietness, rest). This is not the only place where this title is given to our God; we also see this in the following verses (Rom. 15:30; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23). What did this God of peace do? He is the one who "*brought up*" (ANAGO - to bring out, bring again, take up) from the "*dead*" (NEKROS - a corpse, dead) our Lord Jesus. Here we see that it is the Father who participated in the raising of the Son from the grasp of death. One of the reasons why the Father raised the Son from death is the following:

### Acts 17

30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead."

(RSV)

The resurrection of the Son is proof that one day there will be a judgment for all mankind.

v.20 ... , the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

The author calls Jesus the "*great*" (MEGAS - big, high, splendid, stately) "*shepherd*" (POIMEN - a shepherd) of the "*sheep*" (PROBATON - something that walks forward, a sheep). Jesus is the shepherd, and we are the sheep, and he said this about himself:

John 10

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10

14 I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,

Jesus, our shepherd, takes care of his flock and has given his life so that no one can eternally harm them.

v.20 ... by the blood of the eternal covenant

The author states that it is because of the "*blood*" (HAIMA - blood of men or animals) of the "*eternal*" (AIONIOS - perpetual, eternal, forever) "*covenant*" (DIATHEKE - a disposition, covenant, testament) that what is written in the following verse can come true. Please note that the covenant that is mentioned is "eternal". There will NEVER be another covenant or a new disposition for salvation. Do not be misled by what men or religions may teach you. On the cross, Jesus said "it is finished" (John 19:30) and nothing else can be added or changed.

<sup>21</sup> equip you with every good *thing* to do his will, carrying out in us *what is* pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory *forever*. Amen.

In his benediction, the author prays that God will "*equip*" (KATARTIZO - to complete, perfectly join together) you with every "*good thing*" (ERGON - to work, toil, labor) to do his "*will*" (THELEMA - a determination, choice, desire). Please keep in mind that all believers should do HIS will, not their own. This reminds me of what Paul wrote:

Ephesians 2

10 For by his act we were given existence in Christ Jesus to do those good works which God before made ready for us so that we might do them.

(BBE)

The author prays that these believers will be able to do what is "*pleasing*" (EUARESTOS - fully agreeable, acceptable) before God. He adds that it is -

v.21 ... through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory *forever*. Amen.

It is through Jesus Christ that all of this is possible (through his blood). The glory of doing God's will is given to Jesus because he is the one who has redeemed them and empowers them to do what the Father has prepared for them to do. This glory is "*forever*" (AION - an age, perpetuity, eternal) It will never be taken away from Christ.

### **The conclusion.**

<sup>22</sup> Now I urge you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for indeed I have written to you *briefly*. <sup>23</sup> Know *that* our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I will see you, if he comes quickly *enough*. <sup>24</sup> Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. <sup>25</sup> Grace *be* with all of you.

There is a sense of urgency for it is written, I "*urge*" (PARAKALEO - to call near, invite, comfort) you "*brothers*" (ADEPHOS - a brother near or remote). This is what the writer greatly desires from them; "*bear*" (ANECHOMAI - to bear, endure, suffer) with my word of "*exhortation*" (PARAKLESIS - imploration, solace, entreaty). This is the letter that he has just written and all that it contains. The author also states that he has written to you "*briefly*" (BRACHUS - short, few words, little).

<sup>23</sup> Know *that* our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I will see you, if he comes quickly *enough*.

He desires to bring good news concerning the beloved brother Timothy. He has been "*released*" (APOLUO - to be fully free, release, pardon). We do not have any information on where he had been kept captive, nor under what circumstances. We can easily understand that it was because of his faith and not some crime. We also understand that the author personally knows Timothy, since he writes, with whom I will "*see*" (OPTANOAMAI - to gaze, look, see) you. The author expected or hoped to

also be released and meet up with Timothy so that they could both go and visit these Jewish believers in Christ Jesus. It all depends on the circumstances, for he writes, if he comes "*quickly*" (TACHION - sooner, quickly, out run) enough.

<sup>24</sup>Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

He concludes by including a "*greeting*" (ASPAZOMAI - to enfold in the arms, to salute) to ALL (not just some) of your "*leaders*" (HEGEOMAI - to lead, command, be chief) and ALL (not just some) of the "*saints*" (HAGIOS - sacred, pure, morally blameless). In this last phrase we have a hint of where the author is writing from since it is written, those from Italy "*greet*" (ASPAZOMAI - to enfold in the arms, to salute) you. It is unknown where in Italy and when this letter was written.

<sup>25</sup>Grace *be* with all of you.

The author concludes with his last benediction, "*grace*" (CHARIS - the unmerited favor of God) be with you. May the grace of God be with all of his children and sustain them until the very end.