

# **A NEW AND LIVING WAY**

**A Study of the Biblical Book  
of Hebrews**

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# INTRODUCTION

We are sure that nearly all Bible students consider the Book of Revelation the most difficult to understand. The Book of Hebrews would probably be second, if rated as to use and understanding; yet a thorough study of the book gives one the most complete description of the “man Christ Jesus” and His work that can be found in all of the Word of God.

It is called by most critics: The Epistle (or letter) to the Hebrews. We presume that it was a letter since the ending is that of saying goodbye. The Book of Hebrews stands apart from all other books of the Bible in construction and style. The argument or reasoning is different than that of any other book or writer.

Hebrews has little or no relationship to any of the books of the Bible excepting the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible. There are no direct references to authors; rather, “God said,” or “the Scripture says.”

There has been much argument over the authorship, but almost without exception, the commentaries are agreed that the Apostle Paul was the author. These commentaries have taken into consideration all of the arguments, and Paul, as the author, is the overwhelming opinion. Dr. Adam Clarke states, “This epistle is often quoted as Paul’s by Clement of Alexandria, about the year 194. It is received and quoted as Paul’s by Origen, about 230.” Many later students, one of whom was Dr. Lightfoot, were thoroughly convinced that Paul was the author.

It is true that the style of Hebrews is different than that of the other thirteen letters credited to Paul; yet the phrases and terminology used in Hebrews are similar to those in his other

letters. For example, Hebrews 12:3 reads, “Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” and Galatians 6:9, “Let us not be weary in well doing.”

A part of the reason for the differences was the people to whom Hebrews was written. At this period in history, Greek language and Hellenistic culture were becoming predominant. There was a group of Jews who had accepted this way of life. It was to these Hebrew people that Paul wrote. More will be written later about this.

Some facts we will find in our studies peculiar to the Book of Hebrews are:

- 1) the account of Melchisedec,
- 2) an appraisal of faith and people of faith,
- 3) one mention of Moses not referred to elsewhere (3:2),
- 4) a different approach to repentance and sin (6:4-6; 10:26; 12: 17),
- 5) the important concept of the priesthood of Jesus and His office as High Priest.

The aim, purpose, and value are found in the great arguments which begin with the first verse and continue almost to the end of the letter. The over-all aim of the letter to the Hebrews was the phrase which we have chosen for the title of this study of Hebrews—Jesus. “A New and Living Way.” All of the references to the Old Testament and the *old way*, all of the arguments and reasonings have one fundamental purpose—to show the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Jesus is shown in contrast to the angels, Moses, Aaron, Melchisedec, the Levites, and other outstanding patriarchs mentioned in chapter eleven, the faith chapter.

Paul intreated by using the word “consider.” (Heb. 3:1, 6). Paul’s preaching was always “to the Jew first, though he was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He was using this letter to bind “together the Old Testament and the New Testament

in the person and work of Jesus Christ" (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*). Let us remember that the Jews of that time, the days of early Christianity, were being persuaded to accept Jesus as their Saviour. In so doing they had to give up the law, the way of life, and the ritual that had been known to their families for many generations. Over and over Paul showed these brethren, in the flesh and in the faith, that what they had given up was old and decaying. (See Heb. 8:13.) It is not easy for anyone to give up something that has been taught for years. After all, their forefathers had worshiped God according to God's commandments and now they were being told these things were of no value and asked to give them up to follow the Man who had changed the whole religious pattern and ritual.

The outstanding value found in the Hebrew letter which is good for every generation is that *Jesus Christ meets the needs of all men at all times*. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4:14).

As we prepare now to pursue the very wonderful applications, arguments, and reasons found in the letter to the Hebrews, we would use the words of Dr. Adam Clarke, "So many are the *beauties*, so great the *excellency*, so instructive the *matter*, so pleasing the *manner*, and so exceedingly interesting the *whole*, that the work may be read a hundred times over without perceiving anything of *sameness*, and with new and increased information at each reading" (*Clarks Commentary*, volume 6, page 681).

## Hebrews Chapter 1

# “God Hath Spoken”

PAUL BEGAN the letter with a very revered word, familiar to the Hebrews—“God.” This was a common ground on which to start his argument. It, too, was true that God was speaking and is still speaking. The Hebrews were being reminded of the words they had followed and that had been followed by their forefathers for centuries. God had spoken “unto the fathers by the prophets.” God had spoken “at sundry times” or different, and many times. Some translations for this use “in many portions.” God had also spoken in “divers manners.” This refers to many and different manners. The Word of God had come through visions, dreams, the law, the Urim and Thummim (as used by the high priest), and by direct communication. God had spoken to many of the outstanding faithful ones of Israel—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, David, Isaiah, and others.

Paul sets forth his argument, God “hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son” (v. 2). We understand at least two reasons for writing in this manner. 1) The Israelites were familiar with the prophecies about the last days. They knew that a change was to be made in the earth, and the people. The prophets had said there would be warnings. 2) Paul was allowing that the warning and admonition were coming from God, through the Son.<sup>t</sup> The word of Paul follows this line of thinking, “You have believed the word of the ‘fathers.’ Now God is speaking to you again, and it is through His Son.” As Jesus said, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). Paul was using the same plea.

The King James reading, “heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (v. 2) has caused many to believe that

Jesus was the creator of the world and therefore either pre-existed with God or was God. Neither is true! The Emphatic Diaglott reads, “On account of whom he constituted the ages.” As one studies, it is not difficult to see that God created all things with His Son Jesus in mind. All things were created because of Him and to give to Him. Daniel 7:14 points out the giving of “all people, nations, and languages” to Jesus. The angel told Mary that Jesus would become a ruler. The prophets foretold that this “ruler” would rule over all the earth. Ephesians 1:21-23 teaches that God *will give to Jesus* “power, and might, and dominion” over all things, both in heaven and in earth. This was the first step in the procedure of Paul to show the Hebrews the greatness of Jesus.

This One also, through whom God had spoken, was the true representative of God; so much so that He was “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (v. 3). Remember, the subject still is “God”—the first word of the chapter. Of this verse the Emphatic Diaglott reads, “An exact impress of the substance of Him.”

A great Biblical doctrine must be brought to mind in this setting. The Israelites believed in a “living God.” They also believed God to be a being—a person. This God had walked in the Garden of Eden; He had talked to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others; He had shown them that they were like Him in bodily form. But of none of the ones mentioned had anything like this been said of them. Jesus only, the Son of the “living God,” could show forth the “Father” in His person. Jesus is the “light of the world.” He shows God in every attribute that He possesses. What a testimony! This had never been said of Abraham or Moses. They were servants, faithful and used of God, but never in a way as to show God’s full character and person.

The “Son” through whom God had spoken was “upholding

all things by the word of his power" (v. 3); that is, God's power. Centuries before, Moses had been told to prophesy about one who was to come who would be "a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee" (Deut. 18:18). This "Prophet" was to "speak unto them all that I shall command him." Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10). Jesus was given by our heavenly Father to speak the Father's words and to reveal the character, desire, and life of the heavenly Father. None of the forefathers of the Israelites had ever been given such a privilege; yet they had known God and had shown what they knew of Him to their children.

Hebrews 1:4-14 gives a description of Jesus in comparing His likeness and greatness to others. In no other place in the Scriptures can an equal description be found of the Son of God. Angels were held in high esteem by the Israelites. And why not! An angel had spoken to Abraham, Hagar, Moses, Joseph, and others. An angel had gone before the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt. (See Ex. 23:20.) We might further mention that an angel had appeared to Balak, Manoah (father of Samson), Elijah, Daniel, Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Zacharias (father of John the Baptist), and Philip. Therefore, an angel to the Israelites was a very important being. The One whom God had sent to speak and through whom God was being revealed was "much better than the angels," the reason being, "He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (v. 4). God had never said to any angel or to any of the forefathers, "Thou art my Son." Neither had God ever said to any one of them, "Sit on my right hand." The angels had a purpose in the plan of God. They were and are "ministering spirits."

The Saviour whom the Hebrew Christians had chosen to follow was everything any Israelite had ever known in any



servant of God and much more.

In Hebrews Chapter 1, Paul quite firmly established the following facts to the Hebrew brethren:

- 1) God had spoken to the “fathers by the prophets;”
- 2) He had spoken to the “fathers” many times in many ways,
- 3) now (these last days) God had spoken through His Son;
- 4) the Son was the true Representative of God, even the “express image of his person;”
- 5) the Son was “much better” than the angels—better than anyone else, which included the “fathers.” For “God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

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## Hebrews Chapter 2

# “WE SEE JESUS”

Based on the truths of Hebrews Chapter 1, Paul begins Hebrews Chapter 2 with another statement, “Therefore, we ought.” (Even though his writing was directed to the Hebrew believers, but Paul included himself). The admonition was to “give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard” (v. 1). He was referring to the things which the Hebrews had heard concerning Jesus.

ONCE MORE let us examine the situation of the Hebrews. They were forsaking the “traditions” of the elders and forefathers. Too, they were being pressured by the orthodox followers of Judaism to reject their new-found religion. Though they were followers of Christ, there seemed to be many doubts about Him and “the way.”

Again, Paul referred to angels and how the “word” which had been spoken by them was steadfast. Well, they knew that the Word of God had been established through the angels, even the law which all had followed.

“How shall we escape?” This is still a question that is asked by the messengers of God. The answer is the same as it was in Paul’s time. If we neglect the “great salvation” offered by our heavenly Father through His Son Jesus Christ, we are doomed by the judgment of God.

This was the message offered to the Hebrews. God was giving to them something far greater than had ever been offered to their fathers. The message which was spoken by the Son had been “confirmed from Paul by them that heard them.” This could have included a number of people—John, Peter, Stephen, and others.

The message of God through His Son in “these last days” had been by “signs and wonders . . . miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” It is almost certain the Hebrews knew of some of these signs. Some of them may have been present to witness the wonders and miracles. The fame of Saul, who had been converted to become a follower of this same Jesus, no doubt had place in the argument and presentation, for now he was the Apostle Paul. The “witness” which God had established had to do with the birth, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus. All of these had been prophesied by the prophets.

In verse five, Paul again used the angels for comparison. Angels had formed an important part of Israel’s history. There is no promise of any importance made to the angels and their future. Out of this Man, “the man Christ Jesus,” God had “put all things in subjection under his feet” (v. 8). Yet, in Paul’s time, “we see not yet all things put under him” (v. 9). The message which had been given, called “things” in verse one, not only pertained to personal salvation through Jesus, but also told of the Kingdom and all of its aspects. So “all things” had not yet been put under the supervision of Jesus.

“But we see Jesus.” This is the beginning of verse nine. Here is the first reference to the death of Jesus. The Hebrews were familiar with the sacrificial offerings, especially the ones for atonement. This Jesus who had been made lower than the angels had at the time of this writing been “crowned with glory and honor.” Paul continued to reveal the story of the offering of Jesus by writing that the “captain of their salvation” had to be made “perfect through sufferings.” In this argument, three times Paul went back to the Psalms to quote the testimonies of David concerning the One who was to be “one” with them.

Here was a new teaching. Never had a oneness of fellowship been taught by the prophets, nor had it been practiced in Israel. But the Jesus they were following was “not

ashamed to call them brethren” (v.11). This is a picture of the church—the “called out ones” in Christ ' Jesus. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He said, “Go tell my brethren.” He was not speaking of blood relationship, but His followers. The Hebrew brethren were a part of the wonderful group and could enjoy the fellowship.

To counteract any misconception of the origin of Jesus, Paul showed that He was a son of Abraham. “He took on him the seed of Abraham” (v. 16). In this way He was “made like unto his brethren” (v.17). The Hebrews were of the seed of Abraham. Here was one of their own who had tasted death for every man. The fact that He suffered showed that Jesus was a man like they were. But one thing was different. Jesus had not suffered for His own sins, but for the sins of others. This included the Hebrews.

His suffering and overcoming by the power of God made Jesus able to “succor” — to give assistance, help, and relief—to “them that are tempted.”

We see, then, in the closing statements of this chapter that Paul had shown Jesus to be:

- 1) one of the Hebrews;
- 2) one like the Hebrews; and
- 3) the One for the Hebrews.

## Hebrews Chapter 3

# “THE APOSTLE AND THE HIGH PRIEST”

THE HIGH PRIEST in Israel, and to the Jew, was a most important person. He was the ruler of all religious services and doings. He had more authority in the religious life of the people than did the king—for even the king and ruler must heed the admonition of the high priest. It was on this basis that Paul began to present Jesus to the Hebrew people.

Hebrews 2:17 informs us that Jesus was “made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” Paul used a very tactful approach. He called them (the Hebrew Christians) “holy brethren.” As he had done before, again he was identifying himself with them. Paul was accepting them as being with him. This was a close fellowship. Paul told them they were “partakers of the heavenly calling.” Here we have reference to a particular phase of the lives of the Hebrews with which they were acquainted, the calling from the God of heaven of many of their former patriarchs.

After showing that God was now speaking through His Son Jesus, and that Jesus had tasted “death for every man,” Paul was presenting Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Apostle means “one sent.” Here was the one sent who had also become the High Priest. Paul approached the holy brethren in a persuasive manner by using the word “consider.” By this approach the Hebrews could use their own understanding to compare the happenings of the past to their own time. They could see the words of the prophets being unfolded before their eyes.

This “High Priest of our profession,” whom Paul said was Jesus, was “faithful to him that appointed him” (v. 2). There was no doubt in this fact. Anyone who knew the life of Jesus from His birth to His crucifixion and resurrection could testify that He had kept every commandment and word of the prophets. He had obeyed the Word of His Father, the Lord God, in every detail. Whether or not the Hebrews had any doubts as to the identity of Jesus, they could not argue against His life of faithfulness.

To show the importance of the matter of faith, Paul brought in another important figure of Israel, Moses. Moses had been known as a faithful man both to God and to His people, but Moses was never a high priest. Yet, Jesus was “counted worthy of more glory than Moses. Moses as a servant was “faithful in all his house. But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we” was the one to be honored and accepted.

Further to emphasize the prominence of Jesus in the plan of God, Paul stated, “He that built all things is God” (v. 14). Keep in mind that Paul was convincing a people who had known God for centuries. They needed no proof of God or of His greatness or that He was their God. So, time after time in this treatise on Jesus, the new and living way, Paul affirms that God is the Supervisor.

We need to consider the importance of the phrase “whose house are we.” This was pointed directly to the Hebrew believers. They could not claim any family inheritance in Aaronic priesthood or in the tribe of the Levites. It is possible that a small percentage of them might have been of either family. Now each and every one who claimed Jesus as the High Priest of our profession could be counted in the house of Jesus. In Ephesians 2:19. Paul refers to this family — believers, followers, the “body of Christ”—as the “household of God.”

Verses 7 through 11 are quoted from Psalm 95:7-11. The word “rest” represents the promises of God. One great promise is the establishing of the Kingdom in which there will be no sorrow or sadness, no crying or death. This would be a “rest” from the troubles of this life. The Hebrews had such a hope and it was expressed by the apostles when they asked Jesus this question. “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). The direct application of this quotation from Psalm 95 at this time was to remind the Hebrew brethren of the time when their forefathers had died in the wilderness and had not entered into the land of promise. (See Num. 14:22-24.)

To further convince them of their lack of faith, Paul wrote, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (v. 12). Again, he pointed out that all could be “partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (v. 14). It was necessary that Paul bring to memory the incident of the unbelieving Israelites who died in the wilderness, that these to whom he was writing might compare themselves. It was unbelief that brought death upon thousands of Israelites who, according to Paul, had been “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2). The confidence steadfast unto the end” (v. 14). It was necessary that Paul bring to memory the incident of the unbelieving Israelites who died in the wilderness, that these to whom he was writing might compare themselves. It was unbelief that brought death upon thousands of Israelites who, according to Paul, had been “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2). The Israelites had been brought out of sin (Egypt) and had been cleansed by the Lord God through this process of baptism “in the cloud and in the sea,” but this did not guarantee eternal inheritance! This was the persuasion of Paul

in revealing to the Hebrew Christians that they, too, were following their forefathers' footsteps if they refused the Apostle and High Priest Jesus.

The problem of unbelief is still major in our religion. We have many who have been baptized in the name of Jesus and have been cleansed by the Lord God through the sacrifice of Jesus. Yet they fail to continue to be faithful. God is no different in our generation than He was in that of Joshua. Each person will be rewarded according to that which he has done.

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## Hebrews Chapter 4

# “LABOR NOW AND REST LATER”

THE MAIN thought of chapter three has much to do with the time of rest that is presented in this chapter. It was because of unbelief that all of the Israelites coming out of Egypt above twenty years of age, excepting Joshua and Caleb, were “overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Cor. 10:5). Paul had shown that it was possible for the Hebrews (and all who would) to be “partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (3:14).

“Let us therefore fear, lest . . . any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb. 4:1). For many years there was the preaching of the fiery doctrines of hell. Such teachings were for the purpose of making people afraid, and to cause them to accept the way of God. As a people, we have never promoted such doctrines; neither have we found them in God’s Word. Yet, we are warned in this writing of Paul to “fear.” The meaning of this word in the Greek is “to be frightened or alarmed, to stand in awe.”

Later in the Hebrew letter Paul wrote, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31). WE are to be afraid of God in that we are to believe He will perform every word that is written, as it is written. One who is not faithful to the promises of God can expect to reap the reward of the unfaithful. We should teach our children to “fear” God. We should teach them to stand in awe of Him. The promise of an eternal future, in this chapter referred to as “rest,” has been

left to us. There are many other promises, too, that have been left to us. The gospel message has been heralded in one way or another since the Garden of Eden. Paul wrote that it was “preached before” to Abraham. (Gal. 3:8.) He wrote also that it was preached to them. (v. 2). The Israelites did not receive the gospel and believe it because of a lack of faith. There is a definite promise of entering into rest — the eternal future. Paul referred to God resting on the seventh day. (Gen. 2:2.) Many Bible students have believed that the six days of creation refer to the period of time from creation until the “consummation of this age.” They have also likened the seventh day to the new day to come—called by Paul, “rest.” Certainly, Paul was using here the seventh day rest by our heavenly Father as an illustration of the future age. God rested on the seventh day because He had finished the creation. It was all done. Jesus spoke of His work prior to the crucifixion as being finished. We are instructed to labor faithfully to the end. The ones who endure to the end will rest from their labors and enter into the glorious Kingdom of God.

It is interesting to note that in the six days of creation, there is reference made to the “evening and morning.” This was not so of the seventh day, which may be teaching that there is no end to the seventh day. We know this to be true of the Kingdom of God—it is without end. Paul emphasized in both verses 6 and 9, “There remained! therefore a rest to the people of God.”

The time for “entering in” is limited. “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (v. 7). Other expressions of Paul that show the urgency of not delaying are: “Now it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Rom. 13:11). “Now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). So many people are like Felix the

governor, who told Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). If we delay, we are showing unbelief. As Paul admonished the Hebrews, “Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest” (v. 11).

Paul pointed out that each one will be judged by the Word of God. “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (v. 12). The word “quick” indicates that God’s Word is living. It has life in it—the promise of Him who is “our life.” It is powerful—powerful in those who will believe and serve God through Jesus. God told Isaiah that His Word would not return to Him “void.” It is sharp, two-edged, even to piercing and dividing.

The Word of God has described man in every way, even to discerning his thoughts and knowing the intents of the heart. We can hide nothing from God. We are given the opportunity to believe the Word. Through it we will be judged. It has all been written for us and nothing is yet to be added to it. Man will separate himself from the promises of God by not heeding the Word, being separated by the Word that is written.

Paul again makes reference to “a great high priest” (v. 14). In chapter 2, he first taught that Jesus was a High Priest. Let us once more realize that Paul was writing to brethren who had been taught and very probably reared under the Mosaic law and traditions. To them, the high priest was the one who administered the sacrifices. Not so with Jesus. He was the “offering.” Again, in chapter 3, Paul called Jesus the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” Now, for the first time, Paul taught the Hebrews that Jesus, the great High Priest, is passed into the heavens.

He also refers to the Christian life — being a follower of Jesus — as “our profession.” He shows that Jesus, the High Priest, is carrying on in a similar way to that of the former high priests. Each high priest interceded for the Israelites before God. The priest was a man who had hurts, pains, and desires. Jesus was shown by Paul to have these same qualities in that He would be touched “with the feeling of our infirmities” and was “tempted like as we are” (v. 15).

How much we can be thankful for the great privilege that each one of us can “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace [favor] to help in time of need” (v. 16). Can you not imagine that it took courage (boldness) even to go before the high priest of old with an offering and to admit having sinned? Certainly, it takes courage for us today. But we have an understanding and faithful High Priest in Jesus, who stands before God for us. It is through Him that we “labor to enter into that rest.”

## Hebrews Chapter 5

# “CALLED OF GOD”

ONCE more let us be reminded that Paul was writing to people familiar with God and religion. They were Hebrews who had accepted Jesus as their Saviour. But, in our study, we find that they were doubtful as to whether or not they had done the right thing. So, over and over and in many different settings, Paul referred to the Old Testament pattern of religion and the practices with which they were familiar.

As we pointed out in the study of chapter 3, the high priest of Israel was really the most important figure. He was the go-between for all men before God. Jesus was presented to the brethren as the “merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17); “Apostle and High Priest” (3:1); and “a great high priest” (4:14). Through Him, the “great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,” we have one who can “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (4:15), even “Jesus, the Son of God” (4:14). By Him the Hebrews were bidden to “come boldly unto the throne of grace.” It was important to them to have one who could intercede. The high priest had always done this for Israel on a mass basis when he went into the holy of holies once each year.

Jesus was now shown to be a high priest taken from “among men” (v. 1). As in the past, so now, the high priest was a man. Paul had already written that Jesus was of “the seed of Abraham” (2:16). Each high priest was “ordained for men in things pertaining to God” to offer both gifts and sacrifices. (v. 1.)

Aaron was the first high priest chosen, and every Israelite was acquainted with his ordination. The person had to have special qualities. He had to be able to understand people and to love them in whatever condition they might be found. He looked at them through himself. (See v. 2.) Also, it was his duty to offer sacrifices for sin both for the people and for himself. (V. 3.) We will be studying more about this in chapter 9.

In verse 4, Paul firmly pointed out that no man took this office of high priest upon himself because he wanted it, but because he was “called of God.” Jesus had all of the characteristics previously mentioned. He had compassion for the weak, the unfortunate, and the ignorant. He was willing to offer a sacrifice, even Himself, for sin. The sacrifice He offered for Himself was His own life, which was sinless.

To show that Jesus was called of God, Paul again went to the Old Testament. These are writings that should have been known by the Hebrew people. The reference to Jesus being the Son of God was taken from Psalm 2. This being true, other records were established as true. There was a prophecy of a coming change in the priesthood found in Psalm 110. Aaron is not mentioned, and Jesus did not claim to be of Aaron, since Aaron was of the tribe of Levi and Jesus from the tribe of Judah.

Hebrews 2:7-10 relates several of the traits of Jesus. Jesus could offer prayers, and did. This was part of the work of the high priest. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He prayed to God. He gave thanks to God for the bread and the cup when the Communion service was instituted. He prayed for His own in the Garden of Gethsemane—even for those yet to believe. Jesus shed tears on behalf of others. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He wept over Jerusalem and, we believe, had

a compassion equal to tears many times for those He loved. Though He was the Son of God, He had to be obedient. This greatness did not allow Him to escape such training. In this, He was “made perfect” (v. 9) and became “the author [originator, beginner] of eternal salvation” for all “that obey him.” Reference is also made to Jesus being the “author” of our faith in chapter 12. Again, Paul wrote, “called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (v. 10).

In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul reproved the Hebrew brethren for failing to believe. He wrote, “Ye are dull of hearing.” It seems that Paul was suggesting that they were deliberately refusing to hear God who was speaking “in these last days ... by his Son” (1:2). The Prophet Ezekiel wrote of Israel, “They have ears to hear, and hear not” (Ezek. 12:2). It was time for these people to grow up. Paul wrote, “When I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). These Hebrew brethren had evidently known the gospel long enough that they should have been teaching others, but they could not because they had not informed themselves. They still needed to be taught the simple things—“have need of milk” (v. 12).

A similar condition exists in many congregations. Professing Christians, followers of Jesus, are unwilling to “study to shew [themselves] approved unto God.” In plain language, they are lazy. One who is going to teach should take advantage of every opportunity to study, learn, and become familiar with God’s Word. But one must learn to be a follower and to do the will of God before he can expect to be of “full age” (v. 14).

The Church of God, in our opinion, has many today who are like the Hebrew brethren to whom Paul wrote— they are babes in Christ and are willing to stay that way. It is the duty

of the church to teach. One cannot teach without knowledge. Neither can one rely alone on knowledge; he must live by the Word of God. That is the thought which we will consider in Chapter Six.

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## Hebrews Chapter 6

# “IS DOCTRINE ENOUGH”

THE CLOSING thought of the preceding chapter is that the followers of God through His Son Jesus should attain a “full age.” We find that this means to become mature. The margins of many Bibles use the word “perfect,” but one would say that it is impossible to become “perfect” in this age. The word “perfect,” as it is used in God’s Word as pertaining to this life, means ‘upright.’ This is what God asked Abraham to be. (See Gen. 17:1.) What is the way, then, that one can become “upright” and of “full age” in the Christian life? “Therefore ... let us go on” (v. 1). What is the goal? It is given in verse 12: “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Paul in other writings showed that one living a Christian life must build! On what do we build? On the teachings of God! These teachings are of old. The gospel was preached to Abraham. (See Gal. 3:8.) In verses 1 and 2 of Hebrews 6, Paul mentioned six distinct doctrines. Why no more? We find that each of these teachings was a part of the Israelitish teaching. The Hebrews understood the meaning of each. What was it that Paul suggested be left behind for something better? It was the “principles of the doctrine of Christ” (v. 1). Was Paul denying Jesus? No! far from that! The margin reads, “leaving the word of the beginning of Christ.” That Jesus was the Son of God, “called of God,” even after the “order of Melchisedec,” to be the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession” was well established. Through Jesus, one must repent. Through Him, one could be “washed” and made clean from sin. Through Him, one could bring forth “works” that

would glorify the Father. Through Him was the promise of “all that are in the grave” should come forth at the sound of His voice, God has given to Him all judgment. These teachings were all a part of the prophets. They needed no further establishing. They were recorded in the Word of God. They had been ordained of God. These were the “principles” from which to “go on.” In verse 3, Paul showed his intention to go on “if God permit.” He was asking the Hebrews to walk with Him. “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened ... if they shall fall away” (vv. 4-6). Paul shows that the ones “enlightened” had “tasted” of God’s goodness (the heavenly gift—accepting of Jesus probable); they had been blessed with a measure of the “Holy Ghost” (this is given in part at baptism); they had “tasted” of God’s Word (had heard and understood enough to believe and accept, even to knowing of the “powers of the world to come”). The “falling away” would be a rejection of these things—a turning away.

Many have done this. They have followed and enjoyed God’s goodness for a time, then literally have turned their backs on God and have gone after evil and evil ways. Paul wrote, “It is impossible ... to renew them again unto repentance.” We know that God’s mercy is very great. But for one to feel that he can be just in such wrongdoing by repenting at the last moment or that God in His great mercy will overlook such actions is not in keeping with the Scripture. When people have “tasted” of God’s goodness and “power” in the name of Jesus, according to Paul “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame” (v. 6).

To show the probable rejection of those who will do such a thing, Paul used the example of the thorn and brier. Both received of God the blessing of rain, but they are “rejected . .

. whose end is to be burned” (v. 8). It would seem that many of the Hebrew “brethren” were about to reject the gospel message they had heard, and Jesus whom they had received as their Saviour. Paul was pleading, “Let us go on.”

Reader, whoever you are, take heed to this warning of God’s Word. We must “go on.” Just knowing doctrine is not enough. It will not save anyone. We must live by the “doctrine of Christ” and go on “unto perfection” (v. 1)—full growth in Jesus or maturity. This is for dais life.

We are not to continue as babes. We are to become men. These Hebrews had shown a “work and labor of love” in the name of Jesus. They had ministered “to the saints” and others (v. 10), but this was not yet enough. They were to “shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (v. 11). Paul warned them against being “slothful” (v. 12), and pointed to Abraham who, because of his faithfulness, had been assured of God of things to be.

In making the promises to Abraham, God assured them by two facts: 1) He could swear or give His oath by no greater; 2) He, God, could not lie. We read that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (See Gal. 3:6.)

By these same “two immutable” things we “have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (v. 18). The “refuge” is in Jesus and He had been “set” before everyone as the Son of God. Through Him is the “hope” of eternal salvation. This “hope” is an “anchor” of the “soul, both sure and steadfast. . . even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (vv. 19, 20).

Brethren, doctrine is not enough! A knowledge of the teachings of God makes us liable to those teachings. This is especially true if we have been a partaker of the good-ness of

God through them. Do we believe God? Is our hope in the “immutable things” that confirm God to be true and capable of doing what He has promised? Do we believe that He will keep His Word concerning those who are willingly unfaithful?

Brethren of the Churches of God, “let us go on.” We have a great heritage to defend—the “exceeding great and precious promises,” which tell of life only in Jesus, His return to the earth, and the Kingdom of God to be established on the earth. We have the promise of “life abundantly” in the ages to come, but even now we have that promise in living in Jesus and by His example.

Yes, brethren, “let us go on.” Let the “doctrine of Christ” lead us in the “narrow way.” Let it be the “light” that will lead us in the righteous way.

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## Hebrews Chapter 7

# “HIGH PRIEST FOREVER”

THE APOSTLE Paul was presenting to the Hebrew Christians, Jesus as the true Representative of God. He was God’s Son—the express image. He was a man of the seed of Abraham. He was Apostle and High Priest. He was a “high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” He had been “called of God.” Though little is written about Melchisedec in the Bible, it is probable that the Israelites were familiar with the record concerning him. Paul here gave an account of his history. It is as well-written as one could find any- where.

Melchisedec is first mentioned in Genesis 14. Here we have the account of Abraham returning from a war which had taken place because Lot, Abraham’s nephew, and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah had been taken captive. Abraham had taken the spoils of war—men and goods. On his return, he was met by Melchisedec, King of Salem. Melchisedec provided food for Abraham and all that were with him. He then blessed Abraham in the name of “the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth” and praised God, “the most high,” for delivering Abraham. Abraham in return gave a tenth part of all (Heb. 7:2) to Melchisedec for the Lord God.

### *Who Was Melchisedec?*

Anyone who has ever studied the Book of Hebrews is interested in Melchisedec. Who was he? What is the meaning of the phrases that describe him? Melchisedec was King of Salem. Josephus wrote that Salem later be- came Jerusalem.

Most Bible students agree with this. The name Melchisedec means king of righteousness and Salem means city of peace. It has been pointed out in some writings that the word is righteousness and not righteous. There is quite a difference in the thought when we compare the past with the promised future. Why did Paul specifically mention, “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (v. 3)? This was to show the direct contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the one ordained of God to be fulfilled in Christ. No one could serve in the Levitical priesthood without showing his lineage. Both his father and mother had to be recorded as to birth and heritage. A record was kept of their death. A record was kept as to the length of service pertaining to each priest. Melchisedec had none of these to his credit. This, however, did not disqualify him in the eyes of the later leaders in Israel. Josephus refers to him as “the righteous king: and such he was, without dispute, insomuch that, on this account, he was made the priest of God.” (*Life and Works of Josephus, page 44.*)

In order to further prove the greatness of Melchisedec, Father Abraham (one of the most esteemed of the patriarchs) was brought into the setting. Abraham had worshiped God through the priest Melchisedec, “priest of the Most High God.” Paul also showed that Levi, who was born later, was a descendant of Abraham, “come out of the loins of Abraham” (v. 5), and through this had also served Melchisedec. This proved Melchisedec to be the greater.

Let us look at the purpose of this comparison of Melchisedec, Abraham, and Levi. Paul was not writing a history of these men for the Hebrew brethren. He was showing them that Jesus, “called of God,” was the chosen one.

He was teaching them that to continue to follow Jesus would be no mistake. Jesus was the High Priest of God chosen after the order of Melchisedec. This was contrary, of course, to the law known to the Israelites, for all priests had to be of the tribe of Levi. This is shown in verses 14-16 when again a definite statement is made that “he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar” (v. 13). Moses made no mention of another priesthood, but this did not disqualify Jesus, for God had called Him. God had foreordained that it should be! Jesus had no record that qualified Him for the priest’s office. None of His ancestors had been Levites. He was of the tribe of Judah, but He was “called of God” to be a “priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (v. 17).

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The subject of the tithe is outstanding in the first, twelve verses of the seventh chapter of Hebrews. Some have said that tithing is not taught in the New Testament. We cannot agree with this thinking. Verse 12 reads, “The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.” Some interpret this to refer to the ending of the Mosaic law and commandments when Jesus died on the cross. Others say it has to do with the law about the change of the priesthood. There was a written law about the priesthood. The (order of Melchisedec) was from the beginning—it was in the plan of God, as Paul was showing. It was made by an oath. Aaron was made a priest, and the Levites given to the priestly service of God for a temporary period.

Let it be pointed out once again that the Hebrews who were accepting Christ and Christianity were having some very precious things taken away from them. These things included the offering of sacrifices, the great respect for the high priest and the priesthood, the paying of tithes and giving of offerings, and many more. In this letter to the Hebrews, Paul was showing them “the new and living way,” but he tied the old in with the new. The Hebrew brethren needed tangible service to bind them to Jesus. Tithes and offerings were one way. As Abraham had paid tithes to Melchisedec (and even Levi had paid tithes in the “loins of Abraham”), so the Hebrew brethren were to pay tithes and offerings to the “merciful and faithful high priest,” Jesus Christ. This was the “change also of the law” made of necessity.

Jesus was a high priest with the power of an endless life. (v. 16.) He was “made a surety of a better testament” {covenant, see v. 22}. More will be studied in the eighth chapter about the “new covenant.” Jesus, who will live forever, also has a priesthood that will last forever. (V. 24.) Jesus had offered Himself (v. 27), which is some-thing no other high priest had done. For this reason, there was no longer any need to offer sacrifices. Aaron and his predecessors were established by a law, but Jesus was established by an oath. (V. 28.)

In Melchisedec we have the king-priest arrangement. This will be the same when Jesus reigns over all the earth. “Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech. 6:13). As Melchisedec was called King of



righteousness; so Jesus will be called “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6).

Jesus has been selected of God to be the High Priest. Even now He is fulfilling that office, at least in part. He is at the right hand of God as our Mediator. Are you serving God through this High Priest? Are you following Him who has “the power of endless life”? Do you believe in Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled and “offered himself” for your sins? He is the only way to God. For “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The Hebrew brethren were instructed to believe on Him and to follow. Let us heed the same instruction!

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## Hebrews Chapter 8

# “A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY”

NOW OF the things which we have spoken this is the sum” (Heb. 8:1). Actually, it was not the sum as pertaining to the sum total or the end. It could be considered, though, as the summation of the evidence to show that Jesus, called of God, was the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession,” for the word “sum” means “point” (R.S.V.). We think that Benjamin Wilson in the “Emphatic Diaglott” wrote in the most explanatory way to describe what Paul had written. “The chief thing, however, among those we are discussing is that we have such a High-priest.”

It is interesting as one studies the progressiveness of Hebrews to see the psychological approach used by Paul. As noted earlier in our writing, he began with God. This was a common bond for understanding. Then he brought Jesus into the writing—but on a basis of comparison to Moses, the angels, and others. After establishing firmly that Jesus was not only equal to the others mentioned, but was far superior, Paul now was writing, “It is so.” “We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (v. 1).

The description for “such a high priest” is found in chapter seven: “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle” (v. 2). This, of course, brought to mind the tabernacle in the wilderness. It was built by man’s hands according to the word of the Lord received in Mount Sinai. But the “tabernacle” now being referred to is the church, the

“body of Christ.” In Ephesians 2:21, Paul wrote of the church: “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” This is the first of many references to the priestly order and tabernacle worship that will be found through chapter ten. The Hebrew brethren well knew that Jesus was not acting as a high priest in the temple or in a synagogue. The tabernacle, “the called-out ones in Christ,” was true, and established by the Lord.

Again, the place of Jesus in the plan of God as High Priest was compared to Moses. (v. 5.) Again, Jesus is shown to have been given a more superior position: “Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry” (v. 6). He not only was given “a more excellent ministry,” but was (or is to be) the “mediator of a better covenant” (v. 6).

The great plan of God was to be unfolded before them by a more thorough study of the priesthood, tabernacle, offerings, and the religious life of Israel as compared to Jesus. “It is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer” (v. 3). Jesus did have something to offer. He offered up himself (7:27), but He had much more. He was the way of salvation for the world. He was the offering for sin. (See Heb. 7:27.) He was the offering for Israel’s sins. Jesus was to bring about (mediate) a “better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (v. 6). What was the old covenant? It was the law and ordinances and the ritual of adhering to these things for atonement.

The new covenant quoted in verses 8-12 is a direct quotation from the covenant found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This covenant is for the “house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (v. 8). It is not for the church. Israel was looking for the coming of a Messiah. They were looking for redemption. This

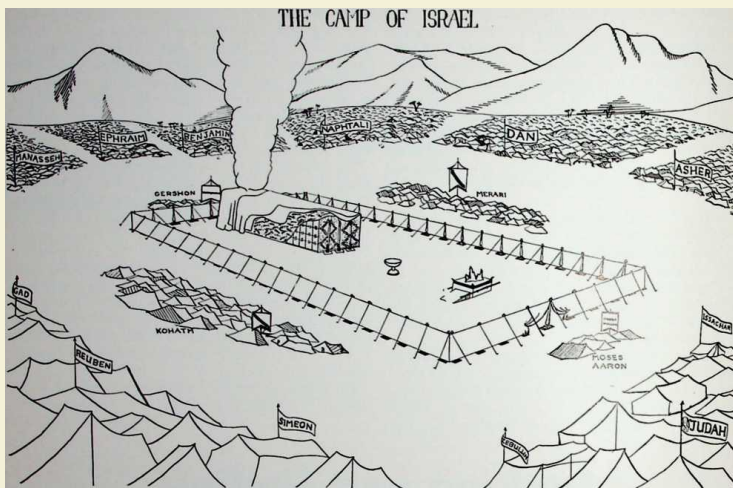
covenant was one of many promises that had been made to the patriarchs and prophets.

Even though this covenant is found in the Book of Hebrews, a book of the New Testament, we cannot apply it to the church. If we do, we then have to say that Israel and Judah are the church. This is not so!

Why, then, at this time, did Paul bring in this covenant? What did it have to do with the Hebrews' Christianity? The Hebrews knew of the "promises." They had implicit faith in God that He would fulfill them as given. What they did not realize was that all "promises" were to be fulfilled through Jesus. Yes, the Hebrews believed in a better hope for Israel. They believed in the atonement of sins through the blood of sacrifices. What they had not learned as yet was that the blood of the "Lamb of God" was the atoning blood for every and all sin—even Israel's.

God has promised Israel a better life. It is yet to be fulfilled and it will be brought about by Jesus, who will "rule over the house of Jacob forever." If Jesus had not died and His blood been shed, there could not have been a fulfillment of this covenant. Notice in verse 12: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Is the "called out ones," is Christ Jesus and is far superior to that of Israel. The covenant (vv. 8-12) has nothing to do with the high calling in Christ Jesus. It has nothing to do with becoming the bride of Christ.

Brethren and friends, it is the "mediator of the better covenant" that we should want to know. Through Him, God will bring to pass all things. Through Him is eternal life. Are you a part of the true tabernacle over which He is the Minister?



## Hebrews Chapter 9

# “THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST”

PAUL had just finished writing in the eighth chapter concerning the first covenant. He stated that it was “old” and “ready to vanish away.” This was a blunt statement to make to Hebrew people, but it was true. To clarify his feelings toward the commandments, laws, and ordinances, Paul referred to them as being “ordinances of divine service” (v. 1). He also wrote of the “worldly sanctuary” (v. 1). We believe that Paul referred to the worship center of the Israelites in this manner to compare it later in this same chapter to the work of the high priest in the tabernacle with that of the High Priest “in the presence of God for us” (v. 24). Paul carefully spoke of the tabernacle and of all its furniture. This whole worship center and plan was ordained of God and was sanctified with

the sprinkling of blood. (See v. 21.) The word “worldly,” as used in verse 1 is used at times to mean “orderly arrangement.” God certainly had established for the Israelites an orderly arrangement in their offerings, sacrifices, and worship. It was so orderly that it is easy for us who look back to see the magnificent patterns, types, and shadows that point to Jesus the Christ.

It would be well to pause for a moment and think of the materials used in the building of the tabernacle and furniture, and the making of the garments for the priests.

They were of the best—gold, silver, brass, and fine linen. These were precious things. They should help us to think of how precious Jesus is to us. The priest’s garments were made “for glory and for beauty” (Ex. 28:2). Here, again, we have the pattern to compare. In Hebrews 1:3 Paul wrote that Jesus was “the brightness of his glory.”

There are patterns in almost all of the tabernacle furniture pointing to Jesus. Let us notice some of them. The candlestick which was to be kept lighted continuously (Ex. 27:20), and the shewbread which was always to be on the table (25:30), are summed up in the New Testament. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), and “I am the bread of life” (6:35).

The golden censer (v. 4) could refer to the altar of incense which Paul did not otherwise mention. The altar of incense stood against the east wall of the holy of holies |by the entrance into it. The burning of the incense before the Lord was to be “perpetual.” (Sec Ex. 30:8.) In this we have the type of the offering of prayers which Paul had already mentioned in Hebrews 4:16. In Revelation 8:3 we have reference to the offering of incense with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Today our prayers

must come “in “the name” of Jesus. Jesus said, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

Paul pointed out in verse 6 that these things were “ordained,” and the priest went “into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.” The first tabernacle was the court of the congregation and the first part of the tabernacle itself was called the holy place. In both of these places there was daily service to perform. It included the “dressing” of the candlesticks (Ex. 30:7), the offering of the lamb both morning and evening (29: 38-42), the changing of the shewbread once a week (Lev., 24:5-8), and many other duties. Once every year the high priest had to go into the holy of holies (called the “second” in v. 7) to appear before the ark of the covenant. He could not go in without blood. In fact, he had to take the blood of two animals to sprinkle upon the mercy seat. First the high priest took the blood of the bullock which was for his own sins and then he took the blood of a goat, which had been chosen by the casting of lot, and this was for the sin of the congregation. Before he went into the holy of holies, he had to bring “his hands full of sweet incense” (Lev. 16:12) and burn it on the altar of incense. Remember, this altar was before the entrance into the holy of holies and it represents prayer. The whole story of this procedure is told in Leviticus 16:2-34.

As long as the first tabernacle was standing (v. 8), “the way into the holiest” had not been made known. We understand that Paul was referring to the fact that Jesus is the “way,” and the holiest is in heaven before the throne of God. Recall that Paul had already written, “We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (8:1). So, the divine service (v. 1) was a figure “for

the time then present” (v. 9) “until the time of reformation” (v. 10). This was the time of the change from the “old”—the first covenant—to the “new”—the second covenant.

The great contrast between the *first* and the *new* or the second is shown in verses 11-14. There was no bullock offered for Christ’s sins. He gave Himself. There was no goat offered for the people. Jesus gave His life “to bear the sins of many” (v. 28). There was no incense burning as He, Jesus, presented His body and blood on the cross. Yet His prayer, prior to this offering on the cross which He made in the Garden of Gethsemane, was the presenting of Himself and the interceding for all of His followers—both then and now.

Reference is made in verse 13 to the “ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified) to the purifying of the flesh.” The full account of this burning of a red heifer is given in Numbers 19. Christ Jesus “offered himself without spot to God” (v. 14).

Because He offered Himself, Jesus became the “mediator of the new testament,” but He also was an offering for the “redemption of the transgressions” of those “under the first testament” (v. 15). The hope of the Israelites, those who had followed the ritual of the offerings and sacrifices, was in Christ Jesus that “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (v. 15). Under the old covenant worship, it took the blood of an animal, and therefore death (vv. 16-22), to bring to pass the goodness of God. Those who took part were forgiven of their transgressions through obedience. Now, under the new covenant, through “the blood of Christ” (v. 14), and His death, the “way into the holiest of all” (v. 8) had been provided.



We could not have had the second without the first. As is pointed out in verse 23, “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these.” The patterns were the plans and ordinances given to Moses for the building of the tabernacle and the carrying out of the worship for all Israel as prescribed by God to Moses. But “the heavenly things”—the right of any individual to “come boldly before the throne of grace,” and the privilege of anyone to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and others—would all lead to “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

For this, it took a “better sacrifice” than that of “the blood of goats and calves” (v. 23, 12). It was necessary, to keep the sins forgiven and the people sanctified in the sight of God, for the high priest to go into the holy of holies once every year. But Jesus “once in the end of the world” gave His whole life and “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (v. 26).

He “entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (v. 24). This same Jesus is coming again “unto them that look for him,” not as an offering for sin but “without sin unto salvation” (v. 28).

Brethren and friends, Jesus gave His life as an offering for our sins. There is nothing else that can take the place of that offering. We are under the wrath of God, which is death, unless we accept Jesus as the “way into the holiest.”

## Hebrews Chapter 10

# “TO DO THY WILL O GOD”

THE SUBJECT of the Book of Hebrews thus far in our studies has been a presentation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, greater than angels in contrast to the law (the old covenant). Very definitely, the law of Moses (laws and ordinances) was referred to in Hebrews 9:19, having to do in this case with the offering of sacrifices. Even then, Paul showed a “better sacrifice than these” (9:23). The weakness of the old covenant was shown in the fact that the sacrifices had to be repeated year after year and time after time, and the “comers there unto” were never made “perfect” (10:1). For, argued Paul in verse 2, if the offerers had been *made perfect* (completely forgiven of their sins) the sacrifices would “have ceased to be offered” and “once purged should have no more conscience of sins.” This was not so. For “there is a remembrance again made of sins every year” (v. 3). The high priest, once every year, went into the holy of holies first to atone for his own sins, then for the sins of Israel. Again, as in chapter 9, Paul reminded the Hebrew Christians that it is *impossible* that the “blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (v. 4).

Because it was not possible for sin to be *taken away* by the blood of an animal, Paul quoted from the Old Testament. The quotation from Psalm 40 is a prophecy of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul used it in that way. Jesus gave Himself—“a body thou hast prepared me” (v. 5)— and He came “to do thy will, O God” (v. 7).

Jesus, in His ministry, gave every indication that He was doing the *Father's will* and was *intent* on doing so. In John 4:34 we read, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17), to call "sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32), "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). "Above" (v. 8), *far greater or uppermost* in His mind (for this is what the word means), was to "do Thy will, O God." This is shown in John 17:4; "I have finished the work ' which thou gavest me to do."

Let us think briefly about ourselves. The argument here presented for the Hebrew Christians is equally good for us. Today, as at any time in the past, God would rather have man submit himself *to the will of God* than to have "thousands of rams" or "ten thousands of rivers of oil" (Micah 6:7). In no way are we suggesting that one need not serve God with material things. In doing "the will of God," Jesus gave His life. This was a material thing—His greatest possession. When one is *intent on doing the will of God*, he will give time, material offerings—in fact, his life.

In verse 9, Paul once more told his Hebrew friends ("holy brethren," 3:1) that the first was taken away "that he may establish the second." This is a definite reference; to the "fulfilling" of the old law which was replaced with the "second," or new covenant—the covenant of love established through Jesus Christ. Paul had told them of the *taking away* earlier. It is recorded in 8:13. He was showing the Hebrew Christians the fruitlessness of following after the "law," for it was a "shadow of good things to come" (v. 1). Paul used these words to describe the replacing of the law—decayeth, waxeth old, vanish away, taketh away. There are many professed

Christians who are ardent followers of *the old law*. There are many others who make no outward profession of religion who I choose to let *the old law* be their guide. Paul's words to the Galatians were: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

Jesus is the embodiment of *the whole law*. Every type and shadow (good things to come) are seen in Him. Be-cause of this and because He came to "do Thy will, O God," we are "sanctified" through Jesus. This means to be made *holy* unto God. Some are afraid of these terms and words, but it is necessary that each one of us be made (accounted) holy in the sight of God—in this life. God said, through Peter, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). No amount of self service, tithes and offerings, or anything else can "sanctify" or make anyone holy. This blessing of God comes on the one who accepts Jesus who by one offering ... perfected forever them that are sanctified" (v. 14). Being "perfected forever" has reference to the life promised us in the eternal age. But notice that before that perfection comes, one must be "sanctified."

The Israelites kept themselves *holy* through the continuous offerings for sin and through the strict obedience of the high priest. In contrast to this, Jesus made "one sacrifice for sins forever," and "sat down on the right hand of God" (v. 12). Verses 15-18 show that Israel will come under forgiveness for their sins through the one offering of Jesus. The quotation from Jeremiah is almost word for word in chapter 8. It is a promise to Israel and has no reference to the church. Paul used it to show the great and extensive mercy of God toward His people.

The great appeal to the Hebrews was made in verses 19 and 20. This is what we feel is the theme of the Book of Hebrews—“**a new and living way.**” Why was the word “boldness” used? It is natural for anyone to feel inferior to one so great as Jehovah. It was probably much more difficult for the Hebrews to forsake the offering of sacrifices and the *ways* of their fathers than any of us realize. Paul wrote, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . . Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (vv. 22, 23). All of this because in Jesus Christ we have “an high priest over the house of God” (v. 21). How simple the plan that God has given us compared to the offering of the animals! We are merely asked to come “before the throne of grace (4:16; 10:19). As we “draw near” and “hold fast,” we are to “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (v. 24). The word “provoke” means *to stir up*.

Brethren and friends who read this article, do not be angry with your pastor or a friend who encourages you to *diligently seek* the Lord. It is our duty. It is the duty of every follower of Christ to *stir up* others. This is mainly done through a deep and lasting faith and an expression of that faith to others.

The *way* to come into the holiest is given in verse 22, “and our bodies washed with pure water.” This refers to baptism. After one has accepted the way of God through Jesus, he should want to *assemble* with the believers, but it seems that some knew, being guided by the Holy Spirit, that some would become neglectful in meeting together. So we have the exhortation, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (v. 25). Constantly the pastors and church leaders see those who call themselves faithful, willingly staying at home for no valid reason. The

television has caused some to become unfaithful on Sunday night and Wednesday night. Children being in school and needing rest has always been an excuse but is no valid reason. (If I were not the father of four, who have never missed a Bible study or worship service for reasons other than sickness, or a rare exception, I possibly would not write so forcibly.) Children will live by the pattern set by the parents.

Verse 26, which reads, “If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remained! no more sacrifice for sins,” has some reference to “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” We are inclined to believe that it has direct reference to verse 25. Jesus is the *sacrifice for sin*. There can be no other way and will never be another way of forgiving one’s sins. If one would come to the place of finding that he had forfeited his right to forgiveness through Jesus, there will never be another way or sacrifice.

Verses 27-31 show the need for faithfulness. There will be a judgment of each one of us — “fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (v. 27). If those who “despised Moses’ law died without mercy,” how can one be “worthy” who “hath trodden underfoot the Son of God . . . and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace” (vv. 27-29) be justified? Paul made it plain that God will reward each one as he has sowed. For God has said, “I will recompense . . . the Lord shall judge his people” (v. 30). Surely none of us would want to “fall into the hands of the living God” (v. 31), yet many will because of “sinning willfully.”

Paul pleaded with these brethren to “cast not away therefore your confidence” (v. 35). This was the confidence they had in God. This *confidence* was to be enlarged to include the Son, Jesus, and the way of salvation through Him. To

strengthen his argument, Paul wrote, “The just shall live by faith,” and he showed that if any would “draw back,” God would “have no pleasure in him” (v. 38). He had assured them that Jesus would come back to earth by writing, “He that shall come will come” (v. 37).

How can one enlarge upon such a great plea and promise as was made by Paul? We cannot! Yet we earnestly plead with you, our readers, to read this Word again and again. Make sure that “your calling and election” are sure. Then *stir up* your fellow men, church men, and others around you. For “he that shall come” is going to come.

Are we holding fast the *confidence* to the end? Or are we among those who “sin willfully” and therefore in God’s sight are despising His grace? Let us believe to the “saving of the soul” (v. 39).

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## Hebrews Chapter 11 “HEROES OF THE FAITH”

THE IMPORTANCE of faith has been previously mentioned: “Followers of them who through faith and patience” and “The just shall live by faith” (6:12; 10:38). The change from the *old* to the *new* would come about for the Hebrew followers of Christ through belief, and understanding, in other words, by faith. Therefore, we find the argument, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for” (Heb. 1:11). The Emphatic Diaglott uses the words “the basis” for “substance,” and “assurance” is used in the Revised Standard Version.

There is a vast difference between faith and obeying the works of the law. The *old* had “waxed old” and “vanished away.” The Greek word for “faith” is the same one translated “confidence” in chapter 3:14. In the letter to the brethren in Rome, Paul pointed out: “We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for” (Rom. 8:24). Faith makes us sure of things to come and hope makes us sure they will be.



Faith is something more. It is the “evidence of things not seen” (v. 1). The Diaglott uses the word “conviction” and the Revised Standard Version, “convinced.” The J. B. Phillips translation reads, “It means being certain of things we cannot see.” That which is not seen is not *unknown* but *unseen*. God has made known “all his works from the beginning” (Acts 15:18), yet many are still unseen. We are convinced they will come to pass because of our faith. It will be at the coming of Jesus that the things hoped for will become realities. “By [faith] the elders obtained a good report” (v. 2). These elders, in Paul’s mind, began with Abel and will be considered later.

Is there anyone who can fully explain how God created the heavens and the earth? Yet “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (v. 3). The first verse of our Bible emphatically states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” We see what God has done and we believe that He did it, but we do not see or know how He did it nor what He used to make what we see. One thing that should be considered here is that the Diaglott uses for “world” the word “ages.” There are three ages (dispensations of time) recorded and previewed in God’s Word. They are: 1) the one before the flood; 2) the one in which we are now living; and 3) the future when there will be a “new heavens and a new earth.”

As far as God is concerned, even the future age has been created, but we do not yet see it. The Word of God is so sure that nothing can keep the future from becoming a reality. Thus, with all *assurance* and *confidence* we are *convinced* of the future.

Now begins a long list of famous Israelites (Hebrews) for the Hebrew Christians to consider. None of these were cited

for faithfulness because of having kept the Ten Commandments and the law. As we study each one, briefly, we will take note of something deeper than a mere desire to follow ritual.

The offerings of Abel and Cain have been a source of controversy for many centuries. We understand the Scriptures, both in Genesis 4:4-5 and Hebrews 11:4, to show that Abel brought to the Lord the best he had. It is evident that Cain did not. Because of his faith in bringing the best to God, Abel showed his confidence in God. Even more important is the fact that “he obtained witness that he was righteous” (v. 4). This is an important factor at this stage in Paul’s writing to the Hebrews. In previous chapters, Paul showed there was no righteousness in the law. As far as Scripture reveals, Abel had not been commanded to bring an offering. He did it because he wanted to serve God.

Who was Enoch, and what was his office? We know nothing more than what is written. Genesis 5:21, 22 tells us that he was the father of Methuselah, and that he walked with God.” Paul said that he “had this testimony, that he pleased God” (v. 5). What a wonderful testimony! Would you like to have the same said of you? What did Enoch do? He had faith to follow God. This was enough. It was all that Paul was asking the Hebrew Christians, *but* he was showing them that “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (v. 6). “Without” means apart from.” Anything less than a faith like that of Abel and Enoch is not enough to please God. It is important to “believe that he is.” This means to believe in a living God.

In Romans 14:22 Paul wrote, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.” “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom.

14:23). In writing to the Galatian church, i Paul said, “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?” (Gal. 4:8, 9). In believing “that he is” is rendered in the Diaglott as “that he exists.” The fundamental of faith is to believe in the Lord, whose name is Jehovah. He is the EVERLIVING (Ferrar Fenton), the *ever-existing*. It is doubtful that Enoch had seen God, yet he “walked with God.”

At one time when God appeared to Abraham, He said, "I am.....thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). We must believe that God is our Rewarder. To those who will not believe and have faith, God will give reward—the reward of the unbeliever. The word “diligently” cannot be overlooked. It is a suggestion of faith. It does not allow for neglect, indifference, or self-appraisal. We can here be reminded of the words of Jesus: “Ask, seek, knock, find.” Yes, this is faith!

To fully establish the fact that faith was the basis for pleasing God, Paul gave a panoramic view of the sages who helped to establish Israel’s history. One figure stands out before we get into the more familiar story about Israel. He is Noah. “By faith Noah . . . moved with fear.” Why? Because he believed in God; believed that He existed and that He would perform that which He had spoken. Phillips translation states that Noah “reverently constructed an ark to save his household.” Through his actions, Noah “condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness’ which is by faith” (v. 7). It is through faith that a follower of Jesus is justified, even sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11) and made holy in the sight of God.

This faith which makes us righteous to God through Jesus is still condemning the world.

Almost without fail, when a Bible student gives an example of faith, Abraham is mentioned. He, truly, was one of the greatest examples of the faithful. He is often referred to as *the father of the faithful*, and indeed he is, for Paul wrote, “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:9).

An important word in verse 8 is “obeyed.” This is the characteristic of Abraham that made him faithful. Many hear the Word of the Lord, even so-called followers, but do not obey. Because of *obeying* the voice of God, Abraham became a wanderer—at least for a time. God had made wonderful promises to him. They included peace and plenty in a permanent home. This is why Paul wrote, “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (v. 10). The city will be the new Jerusalem which will be built according to the plan of God. God is the “builder and maker” (coming from the Greek word *artificer*, from which comes the word “architect”). With Abraham was a faithful wife Sarah. Because of faith, Sarah “received strength to conceive seed,” and this seed was Isaac. (V. 11.) Because of the faith of both Abraham and Sarah, “there sprang there even of one . . . so many as the stars of the sky in multitude” (v. 12).

The faith of the father was found in the son, and so we read, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (v. 20). Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph. (V. 21.) Joseph, because of his faith in God’s promises concerning the land, told his descendants of the time of return and made them promise to take his bones with them. (V. 22; see also Gen. 50:24.)

Moses is introduced by the faith of his parents who hid him “three months” (v. 23). This faith caused them not to be “afraid of the king’s commandment” (v. 23). By faith Moses refused to become a part of the household of Pharaoh and a son of the woman who reared him. He chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God” (v. 25). He could have enjoyed “the pleasures of sin for a season” (v. 25). A sad condition found in the world of today is that the majority of people desire to enjoy the pleasures of sin rather than to suffer affliction “with the people of God.” We are told by historians such as Josephus that Moses was an important man in Egypt, ranking in importance to that of the highest general in our army. Also, there is every possibility that he could have become the Pharaoh some day because his foster mother was a princess. Whatever may have been the future of Moses, he chose by faith to be with his own people who were suffering at that time. “By faith he forsook Egypt” and became a very profitable servant to God. (vv. 27-29.)

What one of you reading this message has not heard the story of the walls of Jericho? Had you ever thought that this great event was an act of faith? Under the masterful leadership of Joshua, a man of faith, the Israelites obeyed the command of God and Jericho became theirs. (V. 30.) Rahab, sinful as she once may have been, through faith listened to the two spies who were men of God, obeyed, and was saved along with all who were in her house. Later she married one of the Israelites (tradition states that it was Hur) and is reckoned in the lineage of Jesus.

“What shall I say more?” (v. 32). We would like to briefly take notice of the ones mentioned and add a few. Gideon was called of God to be a judge of Israel. This he did for forty years.

Gideon established faith by the fleece and the dew. It was he who said, “I will not rule over you . . . the Lord shall rule over you” (Judg. 8:23).

Barak, a general over the army of Israel, was called by Deborah, who was judge of Israel at the time, to deliver the children of Israel out of the hands of the oppressors—the Canaanites and those called Gentiles. (See Judg. 4.) Barak obeyed, but only if Deborah would go with him. After the deliverance, Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise to God. (See Judg. 5.)

In the life of Samson, we again have reference to the faith of others—his parents. (See Judg. 13.) They asked the angel of God, “How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?” (Judg. 13:12). Samson’s faith in God, given him because of keeping the Nazarite vow, caused him to do many unusual things by brute force.

Jephthah made a vow “that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me . . . I will offer it up as a burnt offering” (Judg. 11:31). “Jephthah came to Mizpeh . . . his daughter came out to meet him” (Judg. 11:34). The Scripture relates that Jephthah kept his vow. Paul wrote of him as a man of faith.

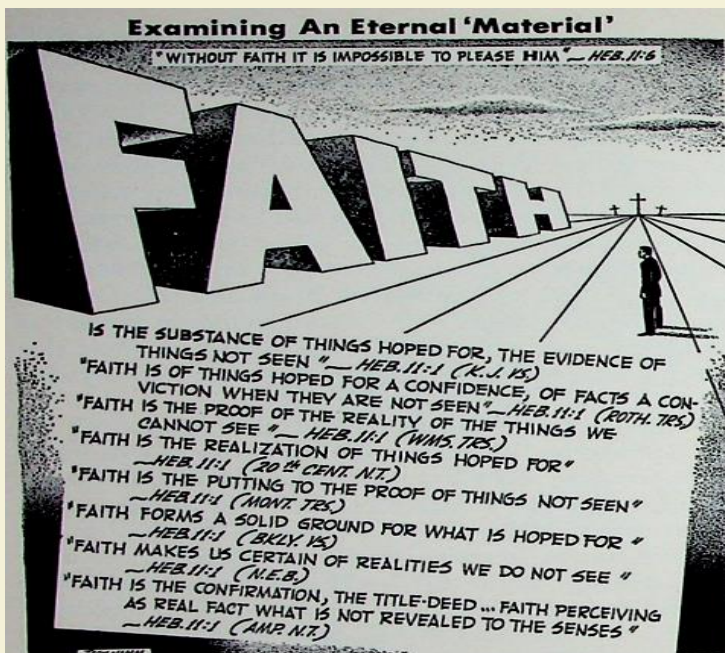
Hours could be spent in writing of the simple, yet steadfast, faith of David. He was of such character that God said of him, “The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; see also Acts 13:22). Again, in the life of Samuel, we have the faith of a parent involved. Hannah, his mother, had been barren. She prayed for a son and if God would grant the answer, she would give him to the Lord. This she did, and Samuel was brought up in the house of the priest and served God all of his life.

Paul made reference to the “prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions” (v. 33). Many of the prophets could here be named. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea. These men performed great things for God. They served in high places (Daniel); ran naked through the land and died a martyr’s death (Isaiah, according to history was sawed apart by Manasseh, son of King Hezekiah); married a harlot (Hosea) ; and, as Paul wrote, “What shall I say more?”

“These all, having obtained a good report through faith” (v. 39), were credited by Paul as having been very remarkable people; remarkable not because of a daily routine of following the ritual of obeying the daily laws concerning the sacrifices, but because they sought to serve the living God with the best of their lives. They obeyed God and humbled themselves before Him.

This, then, was the plea that Paul was making to the Hebrew brethren. The people of faith had not received “the promise” (v. 39), but the promise did include the hope of being made perfect (v. 40). How could Paul know that he with them or “they without us” would not be “made perfect” (v. 40)? It was that he, too, had the assurance (substance) of “the things hoped for” (promises of God) and was *convinced* (had evidence) because of these faithful ones he had mentioned.

Do you have like faith? Will you be rewarded with Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and a multitude of others? Will your life give “a good report through faith”? Brethren and friends, we have the Word, we have the examples, and we have the greatest ever to help us—Jesus, the Son of God.



## Hebrews Chapter 12

# “LOOKING UNTO JESUS”

IN THIS chapter, Paul began a real personal appeal to his Hebrew brethren. We have such expressions as: “Let us, lest ye, ye, if ye”—all of which refer to the individual. The Hebrew brethren were descendants and followers of the *faithful* servants of God. Paul had given a great amount of evidence that many had been *faithful*. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about [surrounded] with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight” (v. 1). A witness is one who testifies. Every person and incident mentioned in chapter



11 in some way testified of God. Also brought out is the fact that each one willingly followed and was faithful. To “lay aside” means to discard, throw down, cast off anything that might hinder. The “weight” meant burdens which were not necessary. In the life of the Hebrew brethren (Israelites, called Jews at this time), the “weight” was the keeping of the Mosaic law which had been taken away that a second (Heb. 10:9) might be established. To-day the “weight” of most persons is the “cares of this life” (Luke 21:34). The appeal included, too, the laying aside of “every sin” (v. 1). Every person who comes to know God and His way is made to know that he is sinful. The person knows, too, that in sin he cannot serve God. The Israelites had known this since the time of the giving of the law. It is probable that sin was understood as a barrier between God and man from the time of the Garden of Eden. The Hebrews were no different. They had been taught to bring the animals for the sin offering. They had brought the flour and the product of the vine for peace offerings.

Now this was changed! Paul asked them to “look unto Jesus” (v. 2). To have been so faithful, the “cloud of witnesses” had surely done this. They had laid “aside every weight” and followed in God’s way. Now God’s way had changed. The way to God is through His Son. The Son has become the offering for sin. He has replaced the bulls and goats, the doves and pigeons, the flour and the wine. So the Hebrews were being persuaded of Paul to “run with patience the race that is set before us” (v. 1). The only way possible to do that was to look to Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (v. 2). To follow Him, they had to “lay aside” the law and all of its rituals.

The greatest sin of any person is unbelief. During this time, the apostles (Paul being one “born out of due time”) were encouraging all men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem has not changed. Our generation is even more given to unbelief. We cannot be doubters! The Hebrews could not be doubters and benefit in the blessing that could be theirs through Jesus, who was greater than any of the “cloud of witnesses.” Jesus, also, was a “witness” testifying of God in fulfilling all of the things that had been written concerning Him by the prophets. In Revelation 3:14, Jesus called Himself the “faithful and true witness.”

Once more, Paul asked his Hebrew brethren to “con-sider him” (v. 3). This time it was in reference to Jesus trial and crucifixion. In chapter 3, he had asked them to consider Jesus as the “Apostle and High Priest.” Jesus had met every kind of opposition. We know the Hebrews who were professing Jesus as their Saviour were being contradicted and some were severely persecuted. In looking to Jesus and in considering Him that “endured such contra diction,” they, too, could “run with patience the race” set before them.

They were to expect chastisement. This was a sign of God’s favor. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (v. 6). Certainly, Paul did not teach the Christian life to be easier than | what they had known. Paul was very definite in his understanding of God’s chastening. He wrote, “If ye be without chastisement . . . then are ye bastards, and not sons” (v. 8).

So, the follower of Jesus needs to feel the chastisement of God. If a follower has never felt chastisement, then that one is not a son. One who feels that he has never been chastised cannot claim God as a Father. Chastisement is necessary

because “it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (v. 11).

“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet” (vv. 12-13). “Level paths” is the phrase used in The Emphatic Diaglott, and “Step right out on your feet” in the Ferrar Fenton translation. Followers of Jesus often become discouraged because they feel the burden is too much, or that they may have been forsaken. Such, we think, was the case with the Hebrew followers. They were being asked to make a complete change in their religious goal and worship. In doing so, they were being persecuted (chastened) and they were disheartened. It was needful for them to take hold of themselves to become ardent followers of Jesus. If they kept in the old way (under the first covenant) they would be lame and eventually “turned out of the way” (v. 13). How true with us, too! If anyone fails to look to Jesus and “run with patience the race,” that one will become “lame.”

Paul wrote for them to “follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (v. 14). They, also, were to look “diligently lest any man fail [fall from, margin] the grace of God” (v. 15). There is no half-way service to God. Paul had said to “lay aside every weight and the sin.” He did not allow for overlooking some of our faults and weaknesses. It is possible for man to start the Christian life and fail. It is possible for one to despise the blessings and gift of God as Esau did. Esau could not regain that which he willfully turned aside “though he sought it carefully with tears” (v. 17). So very many who have made the start to be followers have traded their inheritance (v. 17) for “one morsel of meat” (v. 16).

Again, to remind the Hebrews that God had made a change, Paul made the comparison of Mount Sinai to the “heavenly Jerusalem” (v. 22). The change had been foretold by the prophets. It was not that God had suddenly decided to do something else. Jesus, the Lamb offering for all sin, had been foretold by Isaiah.

The hope of the Hebrews was of the future. It is one that we share. The Hebrews were being called to make themselves ready for that future time. “The general assembly and church of the firstborn” is the church of the living God which is called in Jesus the Son. The church is made up of those who have their names written in the book of life. (V. 23.) They (the Hebrews) were also called to Jesus (not Moses) “the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling” (v. 24). Paul had shown in chapter 9 that when the law was read to all Israel, Moses took the blood of calves and of goats with water and sprinkled the book and the people. The sprinkling in verse 24 was that of the shed blood of Jesus.

So wrote Paul, “See that ye refuse not him that speak-eth” (v. 25). Remember that God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (1:1). To refuse Jesus and the way of forgiveness through Him, would also be refusing God. Paul reminded the Hebrews of the punishment on those who refused to believe. (vv. 25-27.)

Because God has promised to give “a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace” (v. 28). The appeal was being made by Paul as though he was one with them. And certainly he was, if they would “hold fast the confidence . . . unto the end” (3:6). It is necessary to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (v. 28).

## Hebrews Chapter 13

# “THE LORD IS MY HELPER”

“Let brotherly love continue” [Hebrews 13:1]

LOVE is a word that was used very little in any form in the Letter to the Hebrews. Yet, in two of the previous uses it had to do with the Christian life. In Hebrews 6:10, Paul referred to their (the Hebrew brethren) “labor of love”; and in 10:24 we are admonished to “provoke unto love.” This, of course, was one great difference between the new covenant and the old covenant. There was really no love in the offering of sacrifices. To quote from the Proverbs, “Love covereth all sins” (Prov. 10:12). This is the basis of all teachings of the New Testament. As has been pointed out previously, the Hebrew brethren were faced with persecution because of following Christ. The matter of love, then, was important to maintain Christian character and to win others.

Entertaining of “angels unawares” (v. 2) is undoubtedly referring to the time when Abraham lifted “up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him” (Gen. 18:2). Paul wrote that they, too, should be prepared to “entertain strangers” (v. 2). This, in our understanding, does not necessarily refer to a foreigner, but to one with whom we are not acquainted. A very noticeable weakness in the Church of God is the willingness to refrain from entertaining a guest speaker or visitors to our churches. In so doing, we are neglecting a principle of God. One commandment made to Israel was of entertaining strangers, because they had been strangers in Egypt.

Another teaching that is important in Christianity is found in verse 3. We are to remember those who are less fortunate than we by trying to “be all things to all men.” One can see no connecting reason for the admonition concerning “marriage” (v. 4) with the rest of the letter. But what was written is true for every generation, and was a principle established of God. One who would become an adulterer or whoremonger would separate himself from God. The judgment of God (v. 4) will be eternal destruction. (See Rev. 21:8.) The need to *stress the truth* about God and His absolute rejection of evil and filth is a *must* today in our Christian teachings and practices.

Covetousness is one of the great sins of all people. We want what the other has, or even better. We try to keep up with our neighbors and friends. The true character of the Christian is found in being “content with such things as ye have” (v. 5).

This does not mean that one has to sit idly and do nothing to improve his status or way of life. God blesses many persons in material ways. However, this does not guarantee that any person who becomes a follower will receive all he wants. Many could not use riches or even more than ample possessions. Such would cause them to forget God. Remember that God will provide all that we have need of, if arid when we follow His leading through Jesus.

Paul referred to the promise made to Jacob, “I will never leave thee” (v. 5; Gen. 28:15). We have the same God and the same assurance that He will be to us as He was to Jacob. Because of such knowledge, and faith, we can know that the “Lord is [our] helper” (v. 6). Man must constantly be reminded of this lest he completely forget that God provides. To the Hebrews, this was to help them know that, regardless of the stand they were taking, G<xl would be as near to them as He was to their forefather Jacob.

To recognize the leadership of those who had been teaching and preaching was important, according to Paul. For he wrote, “Remember them which have the rule over you (v. 7). This did not have to do with age though we do know that Paul did teach the younger ones to follow their elders. (See Titus 2:1-8.)

Again, in this same chapter we are told to “obey them which have the rule over you” (v. 17). Often church members feel no sense of obligation to “obey” those who are over them. These are the ones “who have spoken unto you the word of God” (v. 7). Many times, a pastor, an elder, deacon, or Sunday school teacher endeavors to lead another, but to no avail. In the name of the Lord and according to His Word, these people should have *rule* over others. This rule is to administer and teach the Word of God rightly. It is to maintain a *right course* in Christian living. There is a responsibility on such leaders, as Paul wrote, “For they watch for your souls, as they that *must give account*” (v. 17).

The same warning about believing the true and only doctrine — God’s Word — was needed for the Hebrews. How very much it is needed today! More than ever the ideas of men are being accepted rather than the Bible. Paul’s warning was against “divers [many] and strange doctrines” (v. 9). To insure them (the Hebrews) that their faith would be rewarded, Paul wrote, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (v. 8).

One last tie to the Old Testament was now used by Paul—the altar. It was the center of worship for all of Israel. On it the sacrifice was made and accepted by the Lord. So wrote Paul, “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (v. 10). The altar to which Paul was referring surely could be nothing else than the *cross*. We know that some think it unwise to think of putting any esteem in the

cross as though it was the center of worship, but Paul referred to it several times. "The preaching of the cross ... is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14); and "having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). Certainly no one has a right to come to the *altar* except by the way of the cross and, of course, through Him who died on it "to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28). Jesus was offered "without the camp" (v. 13), which was outside Jerusalem. Here again was an appeal to the Hebrews to *breaks* with tradition and go outside the camp to follow Christ.

Other traits of Christianity were mentioned by Paul that had a *tie* with the past. Consider: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God . . . the fruit of our lips" (v. 15); "to do good and to communicate forget not" (v. 16). The word "communicate" has to do with sharing with others. In verse 3 Paul had encouraged *communicating* (sharing) by writing, "being yourselves also in the body." There is no closer bond than that among Christians. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). This communicating includes using our *means* to help others and this would be in addition to the tithe. The tithe is the Lord's.

Finally, Paul made a personal appeal to these brethren that would be hard to *refuse*—"pray for us" (v. 18). This was something that each Hebrew Christian could do. There is no doubt that Paul was well known among them, though they might never have seen him. Paul had revolted from Judaism! He had experienced a personal relationship with Christ not known by any other. This experience surely had been told. It is not easy for a person to take a stand against his forefathers, public sentiment, or tradition, but Paul had! Now he was asking for their help in prayer. Then Paul prayed for them. This prayer is found in verses 20 and 21. No greater petition could



be asked by anyone than to beseech the heavenly Father to “make you perfect in every good work,” but it was to be performed “through Jesus Christ.”

Brethren and friends, we, like Paul, ask you to *pray for us* in regard to these articles. Many of you have followed each one through your reading. Some thought has been given to publishing this study in pamphlet form. Ask the Lord to lead. “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

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