



Hebrews

A Verse-By-Verse Commentary

(Originally written one verse per day)

By Pastor Charlie Garrett & Sergio Voitenko

(In Loving Memory of Rory Wilson)

Copyright 2020, Emlen S. "Charlie" Garrett. All Rights reserved

SuperiorWord.org

CONTENTS

(Hyperlinked- Clicking the title will take you to that study)

Hebrews; an Introduction	3
Chapter 1	6
Chapter 2	40
Chapter 3	84
Chapter 4	130
Chapter 5	170
Chapter 6	205
Chapter 7	253
Chapter 8	320
Chapter 9	357
Chapter 10	425
Chapter 11	518
Chapter 12	621
Chapter 13	697

HEBREWS; AN INTRODUCTION

An introduction to the book of Hebrews could go on for many long pages and not speak properly of all that it encompasses. And so rather than give an introduction which will inevitably be repeated in substance throughout the entire book, three main points are to be noted. First, “Who is most likely the author of Hebrews?”

No author is assigned to it, and so only an educated guess can be made. The scholar E.W. Bullinger carefully defends the author as Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. He does this by making a detailed list of the words used by Paul in his other epistles, and then making a list of the same words in Hebrews. From there, he demonstrates that the number of uses results in a perfection in numbers when Hebrews is added to Paul’s epistles. That listing can be found here –

<http://www.biblebelievers.org.au/number03.htm#41>

And secondly, the words of Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision (meaning the Jews), demonstrates that this letter is most likely from Paul’s hand. Peter states –

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.” 2 Peter 3:15, 16

Peter is the Apostle to the Jews. His first letter was specifically written to a Jewish audience. As it says, “To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” The “pilgrims of the dispersion” are Jews. It logically follows that his second epistle is to the same group of people based on his words of 2 Peter 3:1 which state, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder).”

As Peter notes that Paul wrote to the same group of people, and as no other letter of Paul meets this requirement, then it is without a doubt that the letter to the Hebrews is from Paul, or that Paul's letter to the Hebrews has been lost. Based on the numerical perfection of adding Hebrews to Paul's other letters, it appears that this is, in fact, Paul's fourteenth, but unsigned, letter.

There would be good enough reason for it not to be signed. Paul's very name caused (and still causes) deep-seated animosity among the Jews. Therefore, his name is not given in the actual body of the text. Even if Paul is not the author of Hebrews, the letter is purely Pauline in nature. It reflects a well-studied Jew who was fully versed in the law and the prophets, and who was able to lay out a case in a fully convincing and logical manner, just as all of his other letters are laid out.

The second main point of introduction has already been touched upon - "To who is the epistle written?" First, Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." So in a real sense, the letter is, as all of Scripture, written to the people of the world. But it is specifically to the "Hebrews." It is a letter of doctrine, coming after the church-age epistles, specifically intended for instruction of a Jewish audience. It deals with issues that are particularly essential for Jews to understand what they had missed in the coming of Christ; to correct those deficiencies; and to lead them to an understanding of the greatness of Christ – even His surpassing greatness in all ways. And that leads to the third main point of our introduction, which is, "What is the main theme of Hebrews?"

Hebrews is almost like a spiritual technical manual on how to understand the superlative nature of Christ. The author meticulously details his case for Christ's surpassing of various things or people who are held in high esteem, both in the Hebrew Scriptures and among the Hebrew people. Although there is an overlapping of some of these concepts, Christ is compared to angels (1:5); Moses – meaning the law which bears his name (3:2); the Sabbath (4:1); the high priest who ministers the Old Covenant – meaning the Aaronic Priesthood (5:1); Melchizedek who ministered as a priest before Abraham, and who was also king

of Salem (6:20); the Levitical priesthood itself which falls under Aaron (7:11); the Old Covenant as opposed to the New (8:7); the earthly sanctuary of God (9:1); the ministrations and services within the sanctuary (8:6); the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant (8:12); works in order to please God in contrast to faith in Christ (Chapter 11); and finally, heroes of Israel's past (Chapter 11).

In each of these points (and so much more), Christ and His ministry are shown to be "greater than." Each point in which a Jew could place his hope is shown to be a false hope in comparison to the surpassing greatness of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thus, the theme of Hebrews is "Greater Than."

As noted above, this (or indeed any) introduction is insufficient to express the marvelous wonder which lies ahead in the book of Hebrews, and so the only way to discover that wonder is to enter into the book, and to study it. May you be blessed over the next 303 days as we take in the verses of this book, just like we take in each sunrise, one day at a time.

Life application: If you want to grow in your walk with Christ, then stick around for the next 303 verses, first learning them, and then appropriately applying them to your life as context determines.

Lord God, it is always a wonderful thing to start out on a new adventure. But let us never start out any such thing, or even any day of our lives (which really is a new adventure with each rising of the sun), without first asking You to guide us, bless us, and mold us to Your image. And so today we ask this as well. We are opening up the future – moment by moment – and we ask that You be with us and direct our steps as we go. We pray this in Jesus' beautiful and exalted name. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, Hebrews 1:1

Rather than opening with a greeting, or an appeal for blessing upon the reader, the epistle to the Hebrews begins with an outright statement of theological truth. Rendered in its original order, and in a literal translation, it reads, “Various (in parts), and variously (in ways), formerly the God having spoken to the fathers in the prophets.”

In this, a contrast is going to be made between what God has done, and what He will now do. This is the first half of that contrast. There is a revelation of God through the prophetic word, just as there is a revelation of God in His creation. They differ though. Creation speaks of God’s revelation in a general way (general revelation). We can know He is there, and we can deduce things about Him from creation. However, unless He specifically reveals certain things, we could never deduce them. His name is a good example of this. As His name reflects His being, we are left with a void in our understanding of many things about God without knowing His name. That is only one of a countless host of things that we could never deduce without Him revealing the information to us.

However, God does reveal Himself to us in a special way (special revelation). That is through His spoken word. And so the author says that God, “at various times and in various ways spoke.”

“At various times” speaks of God’s progressive revelation of Himself. He reveals what He wishes when He wishes to reveal it. There is a logical, orderly succession of revelations which are leading to a fuller and fuller understanding of who He is, what He expects, how He will fix what happened at the fall, and so on. A good example of progressive revelation is when He spoke to Moses with the words –

“And God spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I *am* the Lord. ³I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name Lord I was not known to them.’” Exodus 6:2, 3

God chose, at a particular time, and for a particular reason, to reveal His name to Moses. He also chose to conceal what He would do in the church. The Jews had no idea what was coming in Christ, and how he would establish the church. This is spoken of by Paul. He calls it a “mystery” in Ephesians 3:8-13. Elsewhere, this term “mystery” is used to explain other things that had never been previously revealed by God, but which were revealed at exactly the right moment in order to effect His purposes and to reveal His hidden knowledge to the people of the world. This was even alluded to in all the way back in Deuteronomy –

“The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are* revealed *belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29

Several of the various ways that God spoke are noted in the Old Testament. Job hints at some of them –

“For God may speak in one way, or in another,
Yet man does not perceive it.

¹⁵ In a dream, in a vision of the night,

When deep sleep falls upon men,

While slumbering on their beds,

¹⁶ Then He opens the ears of men,

And seals their instruction.” Job 33:14-16

There are times when the Lord spoke directly *to* an individual, Moses for example. There are other times where He would speak *through* an individual, such as is recorded in 1 Chronicles 12:18.

Further, God would increase the sophistication of His revelation based on the maturity of the audience, and even within a particular concept – going from elementary revelation of an issue to a more developed and spiritual understanding of that issue. The sacrificial system is a good example of this. At first, the people were instructed to simply obey the sacrificial laws in a prescribed manner. However, it was later revealed that sacrifices without an accompanying heart that was right before the Lord were unacceptable (e.g. see Isaiah 1:11).

These are some of the various times and ways God “spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.” The Greek word for “in time past” is an adverb which signifies “formerly.” We could say, “of old.” It is the way God once spoke, but no longer does. God gave revelation in these times and ways, but that way is now over. The contrasting way will be explained in the next verse. This can be fully understood in Jesus’ words about John the Baptist. In Matthew 11:13, Jesus says, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” Now, something new has come about.

God spoke to the fathers through the prophets. He did it in that way in the past, and He did it at various times and in various ways. However, all things were leading to something greater. Our author will next reveal that to us.

Life application: Hebrews is going to be an involved study. It will contain as much instruction as a technical manual, and it will hold as much doctrine as any in-depth work needed to obtain a doctoral dissertation (and more), but one verse at a time, and each verse in its proper context, and we will get through it all the wiser in the things of God. Let us be patient, meticulous, and willing to see this book through until the end.

Lord God, what an absolute treasure Your word is. Thank You for the many levels of understanding which can be drawn out of it. A child can hear the simple message of Jesus and come to an understanding of his need for Him, and the greatest scholarly mind ever can come away astonished at the depth of information he has learned from a careful study of a particular doctrine found in it. There is abundant wealth in Your word. Thank You for the riches we receive from it! Amen.

...has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; Hebrews 1:2

These words are a contrast to verse 1. God once spoke in a certain way to the fathers by the prophets, but something new has come. He “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.” The term, “these last days,” is literally “at the last of these days.” One must think of God’s revelation coming in one of two distinct epochs. The first is the period of the Old Covenant; the second is the period of the New Covenant. But what must be considered is that the New Covenant was not initiated until the night of Christ’s crucifixion. Thus, the period of record in the gospels is not included in the New, but in the Old. The New Covenant is given because of the shed blood of Christ, and it is a Covenant given not to the church, but to the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31). The letter to the Hebrews is explaining this to them.

It is in the last of these days that God has “spoken” to us. The word is in the aorist tense. There is a single act involved in the matter. As Cambridge says –

“Are, and were, and will be are but *is*

And all creation is one act at once.”

God's revelation is put forth, and it has come to us at various times and in various ways, but it is one word which is spoken forth from Him. We are in the stream of time; He is not. The reception of that revelation to the fathers and now to us bears one common element – God has spoken to the people of the world. He once spoke through the prophets; He now speaks through the Son. However, in the Greek, there is no article before "Son," and the word "*His*" has been inserted. It more literally reads, "...spoken to us by a Son." This doesn't mean one of any number of sons, but the nature of how the revelation is given – "How is the revelation now given? It is given by a Son, not merely by a prophet, or through an angel." The contrast to verse 1 is further highlighted by this statement. It is this Son, "whom He has appointed heir of all things."

Again, an aorist verb is used. It more correctly reads, "whom he appointed." It is the Son who was appointed in the eternal counsels of God to be the means by which God would speak to the people of the world in the time of the New Covenant, and it is this Son who is appointed "heir of all things."

As soon as the Son is mentioned comes the noting of the appointment as heir. And this occurred not after God made the worlds, but before. God determined before the worlds were made that they were appointed to the Son. What we are seeing is the determining mind of God, before anything existed, concerning the order and structure of how things would be done, and how things would be determined. This is seen with the words following the appointment as heir which state, "through whom also He made the worlds."

By place the making of the worlds after the appointment of being heir, we are left with the understanding that the Son was designated heir, the worlds were then made, and they were destined to be His possession. Thus, the glory of the Son precedes creation. He was with the Father all along. John 1:1-3 is called to mind with the structure of how Hebrews 1:2 is presented –

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

None of the glory of the Son is diminished in what is being said. Rather, it is being highlighted. Finally, the word translated as “worlds” is the Greek word *aiōnas*. It speaks of an age, a cycle (of time), especially of the present age as contrasted with the future age, and of one of a series of ages stretching to infinity. Thus, this is speaking not just of the physical worlds which comprise the universe, but the span in which they exist as well. Everything associated with the creation is contained in this thought. The word “universe” closes in on the thought, but it is insufficient unless one thinks beyond the physical aspect of it to include the span of the ages in which the universe exists.

Life application: The comments on Hebrews 1:2 by great scholars of the past are lengthy, detailed, and even complicated. Each approaches the words in a different manner, and each struggles to explain what is being relayed in a careful, coherent manner. Be sure to not limit yourself to one commentary on the Bible. There is an immense amount of information out there which is given to bring the student of the Bible to a fuller understanding of the marvelous workings of God.

Heavenly Father, it is beyond our ability to grasp the wisdom which You display in Your creation. From the intricacy of the flowers we see, to the balance of the elements in the world which allows life, to the placement of the worlds in their heavenly orbits for proper order... Nothing is missing, everything works as it should, and beauty and glory are seen in all of it. How great You are, O God. Amen.

...who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Hebrews 1:3

The words here speak of Christ Jesus. First, it says of Him, “who being.” The word *ōn*, or “being,” speaks of His absolute being. It is in the present tense, speaking of the timeless nature of what will be conveyed. Christ, being now spoken about in relation to God (and in the absolute sense and in a timeless manner), is said to be

“the brightness of *His* glory.” The word is only used here in the Bible. It bears a suffix which intensifies the word “shine.” Thus it is someone who literally blazes forth in radiance. This speaks of the eternal radiance of Christ who shines forth the refulgent glory of the Godhead. This shining glory of God breaks through all darkness. This is both literal and spiritual. In a literal demonstration of this, we have the passage of the transfiguration which gives a glimpse of His glory. In a spiritual sense, we have numerous references in the writings of the apostles, such as 2 Corinthians 4:6 –

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The glory of God radiates through Christ who is also described as “the express image of His person.” Again, another word unique in Scripture is used to convey the thought, *charaktér*. One can see where the word “character” we now use is derived from. In the Greek, it signifies an engraving, and thus an exact impression or likeness. The original word signified the tool used for engraving. Eventually, it specifically referred to “a die.” The die would be used to impress an image which then conveyed the reality behind the image.

This express image is of “His person.” This is speaking of God, and uses another rare word to describe Him, *hupostasis*. It speaks of an entitlement to someone; that which is guaranteed under a particular agreement. The thought here being conveyed is that Christ is in entitlement to the glory of the Godhead; to convey it and reveal it in the creation. He is the link between the unseen God and His creation. He is how God reveals Himself to us. Thus, the glory of God – both His brightness and His essential being – is expressed in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Godhead is in agreement that Christ is the means by which His glory is so revealed. But there is yet more...

We are next told that Jesus Christ is “upholding all things by the word of His power.” Elsewhere, Jesus is clearly shown to be the Creator (e.g. John 1:1-3 & Colossians 1:16). He is here spoken of as the Sustainer. It is a thought similar to

Colossians 1:17 which says, “...in Him all things subsist” (Darby). Jesus is not only the means by which God created, but He is the means by which all things are sustained. He is how all things are upheld and how they hold together. Without Him there would be no continuance of the creation.

God created by His spoken word. This is seen in Genesis 1. It is expressed also in Psalm 33:9 which says –

“For He spoke, and it was *done*;
He commanded, and it stood fast.”

It is this same Word which continues to uphold that which was created. The word translated as “word” is *rhéma*. It is a spoken word made by the living voice; an utterance. Christ is the Word, and He both creates and sustains “by the word of His power.” Logically, if the universe was created by Christ, and the universe is sustained by Christ, then He is the omnipotent God. No thing, from the movement of the smallest particle, to the intense boiling heat of ten billion stars, exists or works apart from the sustaining and energetic power of Christ. But there is more...

The author has brought us from God, speaking through His Son, to the understanding that His Son is both the Creator and Sustainer. But He is also our Redeemer. This is seen with the words, “when He had by Himself purged our sins.” The same God who set all things in motion, and who continues to work in the sustaining efforts of the universe, also purged our sins through His own work. It was not through something (or someone) else in creation, but Christ Himself is the agent of our purification.

One must ask, “Why is this placed here in the author’s discourse on the nature of Christ?” The answer shouts back that it is God Himself, through Christ, who alone purifies, sanctifies, and makes holy. Whatever the value of man is, that value stands as the greatest reason for the creation itself. It is not merely that man is a *part* of creation, but that he is the *point* of creation. God determined to create,

not because He had a need in Himself for the creation, but out of an act of love, He created in order to share His glory with His creatures. Everything that is made was with this in view. And so in order to have that sharing come about, and knowing that man would fall, God chose (even before creating, see Revelation 13:8) to accept what would come about after the fall, which is redemption through the sacrifice of Christ.

It is Christ – the Creator, Sustainer, and Purifier – who then “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The “Majesty” here is God the Father. Christ is said to have “sat down,” thus ceasing from His now accomplished work of purification. The position of His seating is at the Majesty’s “right hand.” This is not a literal, tangible position, but rather a position of authority and power. God doesn’t have parts, and so to express meaning for us to understand, anthropomorphic terms are used. The “right hand” is this symbolic position of power and authority within the Godhead. As Vincent’s Word Studies states, “The verb denotes a solemn, formal act; the assumption of a position of dignity and authority.” He sat down, thus resting from His labors, and with the full power, authority, and dignity of the Godhead being worked through Him.

Life application: Jesus Christ is God. Nothing could be more clearly understood from a right interpretation of Scripture. God did not use a mere part or person in His creation to purify His people. Rather, He took the role upon Himself, uniting with His creation in the Person of Jesus Christ. To state that Jesus Christ is a created being is the highest blasphemy of all. It is a denial of the Son which is explained by John as antichrist –

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” 1 John 2:22, 23

If you cannot come to the confession of faith that Jesus Christ is Lord (meaning God), you will be condemned when He comes for judgment. Believe and be forgiven.

Lord God, it is hard to imagine the value of man. We are only a part of Your creation, and we are the part which has brought rebellion, hatred, and death to it. And yet, You were willing to come and redeem us from our sins in the Person of Jesus. What is worth such a high cost? What is man that You take notice of Him? Help us, Lord God, to honor You and glorify You for the high cost of Calvary's cross, and the full redemption we have through the giving of Jesus. Amen.

...having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Hebrews 1:4

The author now introduces the first of many “greater thans” that will be seen, either explicitly or implicitly, in the book. This one is Christ in comparison to the angels. The word translated as “better than” is *kreittón*, and it signifies that which is stronger or more excellent. It is in the comparative form and so it expresses “what is *better* because more fully developed, i.e. in *reaching the needed dominion* (mastery, dominance); ‘*better*’ after exerting the *power* needed to ‘plant down God's flag of victory” (HELPS Word Studies).

This is now applied to Christ as He has “become so much better than the angels.” What seems peculiar is the abrupt nature of suddenly introducing angels here. The author was speaking of Christ, and all of a sudden He notes Christ's superiority to angels. It is possible that the letter is written in response to a request concerning Christ's nature, and he is simply and clearly answering each question. Or it could be that a note of introduction was given with the letter which was not included as a part of the epistle. Either way, the obvious connection to a Jewish audience is seen right here with the comparison.

Angels are noted throughout the Old Testament in many prominent ways. They were considered to have great power and authority, but – without any delay – the author shows the supremacy of Christ over these greatest of heavenly beings after God Himself. Understanding this, the words, “having become so much better,” are not speaking of a development in Christ that was actually lacking. Rather, the

words are tied to the thought of having “sat down” after the purification of sins mentioned in the previous verse. The exaltation of Christ was conditioned upon his having fulfilled the human aspects of His ministry. It is what is referred to in the 8th Psalm –

“For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.” Psalm 8:5

The lower state of Christ’s humanity is then contrasted with His exaltation. It is not that Christ was essentially lower than the angels in His being at any point, but that His work had to be accomplished in His human state before He was known to truly be the Son of God. This is what the author is now emphasizing. In the accomplishment of this work in and among humanity, He was shown to be “better than the angels,” meaning superior. In this proof, “He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

An inheritance is something which is bestowed upon an heir. Christ claimed to be the Son of God, a title which granted Him all the rights and inheritance of the Father. In the successful completion of His task of redeeming man through the purification of sin, He showed forth His right to that inheritance, being truly the Son of God. If He were merely a man, He would have inherited sin through His father. Upon His attempt to purify sin (meaning a substitutionary atoning death), He would have died and remained dead. The wages of sin is death; having inherited sin would mean He too would remain dead. Only the sinless Son of God could go on forever without the permanent effect of death. This explains the dumbfounded question of the Jews when speaking to Jesus –

“We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how *can* You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” John 12:34

The anticipated Messiah (Christ) was expected to live forever. But Jesus, who claimed to be this Messiah, said that He would die. It made no sense to them. But they had missed the connection between His humanity and His deity. As a Son of

Mary, He is fully human. As the Son of God, He is deity. In both states He was, and remains, sinless. When He died, it was not for His own sin, but for the sin of others. Thus, in His resurrection to eternal life, He “has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” No angel could ever claim to be the Son of God in the way that Christ is THE SON OF GOD. The full inheritance of the Father belongs to Him, and it is His name which is thus more excellent than theirs. This is what Paul spoke of in Philippians 2 –

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:5-11

Paul explained Jesus’ work, and then he cited Isaiah 45:23 where the Lord (Yehovah) stated that to Him every knee would bow. Paul directly equated Christ Jesus, upon the completion of His work, to Yehovah the Lord. Everything tied up in the name I AM THAT I AM belongs to Jesus. To understand that glorious and exalted name, this sermon is a must –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBe0gINLqM>

Life application: Jesus Christ is the Lord (Yehovah) incarnate. No other being is superior to Him as He sits at His place within the Godhead. What Jesus have you called on? There is the true Christ, and there are antichrists. The true Christ is the One described in the Bible. He is very God of very God. To deny this is to deny Christ. To deny Christ is to be condemned. Call on Christ Jesus the Lord and be saved. All beings, even all of the heavenly host, shall bow before Him.

Heavenly Father, the one inescapable truth of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is God incarnate. Any other view is a false Jesus and a false gospel. As the Son of God, He has obtained the full inheritance granted to Him, and so we honor You by honoring Him. Praises to You, O God, for what You have done in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For to which of the angels did He ever say:

“You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You”?

And again:

“I will be to Him a Father,

And He shall be to Me a Son”? Hebrews 1:5

The author now goes from his statement that Christ is “so much better than the angels” to a demonstration of this by asking rhetorical questions. He begins with “For to which of the angels did He ever say.” This is speaking of God making a statement about angels. Did God ever say to one of the angels, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You?” The answer is obvious, “None.” Angels are a part of creation. If they were not, then they would be God. As there is only one God, they are created beings.

The quote is from Psalm 2:7. The words, “You are my Son,” place “Son” in the emphatic position. It is true that angels are termed the “sons of God” in Job 1:6, but this is a collective term. Likewise, Israel is called God’s son as a collective in Exodus 4:22. However, at no time is an angel called, “The Son of God.” A distinction is being made in the use of the singular. But Christ is termed a Son, not merely by calling, but because He is begotten of the Father. It was on a particular day, “Today,” that Christ was acknowledged as such. As noted in the previous verse, it was “when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” With His earthly mission complete, the truth of the Sonship was validated. Israel had rejected their king; God had confirmed His Son.

With this unique relationship established, and which excludes anyone else (including angels), the author again turns to Scripture to confirm the analysis by asking his second question. It is based on the same main question as the first, “For to which of the angels did He ever say.” And the question’s proposal is –

“I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son.”

The answer is again, “None.” The quote is derived from 2 Samuel 7:14 (and repeated in 1 Chronicles 17:13 & 22:10), as it is contained in the Greek translation (the Septuagint). Initially, these words were applied to Solomon, but the nature of them led the Jewish nation to understand that they were, like the words of the 2nd Psalm, to be taken in a messianic tone. The words speak of a father in relation to a natural son who issues from him. Solomon was born of David, a king. Likewise, Christ is born from this same line of promise. Each king that issued from David might have been the Messiah, however, only one would be able to claim that role through an eternal, indestructible life. Only Christ meets that qualification. And yet further, Christ is born of the King of the universe. Thus the idea is extended not only to Christ’s messiahship over the Davidic throne, but to the kingship of Christ over all of Creation, including the angels.

It should be noted that both verses used for this line of argumentation have literal, human, fulfillments of them. And so it is easy for some to dismiss these arguments in favor of them speaking of Christ as unreasonably applied to Him. However, the expectation of these passages was, and even today is, that of a messianic fulfillment of them among the Jewish people. This was, like countless other passages of Scripture, the intended use of them all along. There are literal fulfillments of passages in people found in the Old Testament, and then there are the intended reasons for including those passages in Scripture, which is a greater fulfillment in Messiah. This is what is the case with these.

Life application: If you are reading Scripture and come across a passage which seems difficult to understand why God would even bother placing it in the Bible, it is a good clue to you that He is trying to get you to see a pattern, parallel, or picture of Christ in it. In the end, all Scripture given to Israel was for the purpose of them seeing their coming Messiah (John 5:39).

Lord God, it's hard to understand how people can read the pages of the Old Testament and not see Christ Jesus on every page, and indeed in every word. You have carefully, meticulously, and methodically placed passages in Your word to show Him to us in a thousand varied ways. Studying the Bible from this perspective reveals Him again, and again, and again. Thank You for the sure faith we possess. It is grounded in thousands of years of carefully laid out types and pictures! Hallelujah for this! Amen.

But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

“Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Hebrews 1:6

The words of this verse are incorrectly translated by some versions by saying something like, “And again, when he brings in the first-begotten into the world...” In the Greek, the word “brings” is tied to “again.” It is not a supplementary statement to the previous verse. Rather it is a new thought referring to a new point in time. In the previous verse, it spoke of Christ’s first advent (Today I have begotten You). That was when He “by Himself purged our sins” (verse 3). Now it is speaking of a second event.

“But when He again brings the firstborn into the world,” speaks of that event. The Firstborn is Christ. He is termed this several times in the New Testament, such as Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15, 18, and Revelation 1:5. The words, “He again brings” Him “into the world,” is a grammatical tool where the “event is conceived as occurring at an indefinite time in the future, but is viewed as complete” (Vincent’s Word Studies). There is a time which is set, and which God spoke of as accomplished, though it is yet future. It is where the cited Scripture would apply

directly to Christ's second coming. It is stated by the author as, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

Here he does not cite the Hebrew version of the Scriptures, but the Greek translation of it. It is cited in Deuteronomy 32:43 and again substantially in Psalm 97:7. The Greek translation of the Old Testament is what the author consistently uses for his Old Testament citations.

It is true that the angels of God had recognized Christ's works after they were completed. 1 Timothy 3:16 says that He was "seen by angels." However, the culmination of Christ's great redemptive work lies yet ahead at His second coming. It is a time when the fulfillment of this Scripture will be then realized.

It should be noted that in citing Psalm 97:7, it is another of the countless references to the deity of Christ. There, it is applied to the Lord (Yehovah) of the Old Testament. In Hebrews, it is applied directly to Jesus. It is an implicit reference, then, to Christ being the Lord (Yehovah) of the Old. Such is the reason for the inclusion of this. It demonstrates, unequivocally, that Jesus is "greater than" the angels.

Life application: As the angels were created by God, and as the angels will worship Jesus, it is rather obvious that Jesus is God. The particular wording of this verse, and many others, further solidifies this point. If you have called out to Jesus, but not as Lord (meaning God), you have called out to a false Jesus. Jesus is God. This is the message which is seen time and again as we wind our way through Scripture.

Lord God Almighty! Great and glorious are You. You have set the earth in its place as the center of Your attention. And You have placed the earth here as a dwelling for man. Everything is set with this in mind. And then, after the focus of Your attention – we humans – rebelled, You were still willing to send Christ Jesus to redeem us. What is the value of man? If You sent Jesus to bring us back to You, we must have great value. Help us to recognize this, and live lives worthy of that state. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

And of the angels He says:

**“Who makes His angels spirits
And His ministers a flame of fire.”** Hebrews 1:7

Our author here once again paints a contrast between angels and the Son. In this, he begins with, “And of the angels He says.” The words are to be contrasted with what will be said in the next verse, “But to the Son *He says*.” This second set of contrasts is given to show that not just an isolated thought about the superiority of the Son was pulled out of Scripture, but that it is a consistent theme which can be found and relied upon. Further, the contrast is that of the many (angels) to that of One (the Son). And again, the term “angels” signifies messengers who go at another’s bidding. The term “Son” signifies one who is of the inheritance and who thus has authority to send. Understanding this, he now turns to Psalm 104:4 –

Who makes His angels spirits,

His ministers a flame of fire.

The NKJV, cited here, appears to not capture the intent of what is being relayed. The word for “angels,” in both Hebrew and Greek, signifies a messenger. And so the author is showing that angels are messengers. And again, the word for “spirits,” in both Hebrew and Greek, has the dual meaning of “winds.” Young’s Literal Translation more closely follows the intent of the psalm –

“Making His messengers -- the winds, His ministers -- the flaming fire.”

This verse in Hebrews is not speaking of the creation of angels as spirit-beings, but the employment of angels as directed beings, likened to the forces of wind and fire. This is what is on his mind here. And those messengers come in the form of wind and fire. This follows through with the thought of what occurs several times in Scripture, such as with Elijah in 1 Kings 19 –

“Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, *but* the Lord *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the Lord *was* not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the Lord *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.” 1 Kings 19:11, 12

The Lord created the winds as a resistless force. It cannot be grasped with the hand, and yet it can cause a variety of effects, from cooling the skin to tearing apart the mountains. Likewise, fire is a part of creation which God directs as a consuming weapon of destruction.

Further, the winds are an invisible force, whereas fire is a visible one. And so there is a contrast to show that God is in control of both that which can be seen, and that which cannot be seen. And as another reason for considering this, lightning is known from the Old Testament to be considered the “fire of God,” such as in Job 1:16. Therefore, like the storm which issues forth both wind and fire from God, the angels are likened to the wind and fire of the storm, being directed by God. Whichever way one looks at them, they are created, they are directed by another, and they accomplish the purposes of God for Him. In contrast to this will be the next verse.

Life application: At times, it is hard to determine if a word which has two meanings – such as the Hebrew *ruakh* which means both “spirit” and “wind” – is speaking of one or the other. And so, these differences normally come down to

looking at the rest of Scripture to find out what is on the author's mind. If a suitable analogy can be made, then the translation which carries that analogy should be used. If not, then it is up to translator's preference as to which meaning he assigns. In the end, the only way to evaluate these things then is to know the rest of Scripture. Be sure to read your Bible daily. The more you do, the more you will be able to call to mind the many thoughts which surround individual concepts. Read your Bible.

Gracious and merciful God, Your word says that You send forth Your angels for various purposes. At times, they are sent out for destruction, and at times they are sent out as ministering spirits for Your people. We would pray that You would watch over us in mercy, send Your angels to care for us, and to form a wall of protection around us from the entities of evil which are also there, working to bring us harm. Thank You, O God, for hearing our prayer and responding according to Your wisdom and care of us. Amen.

But to the Son *He says:*

“Your throne, O God, *is forever and ever;*

A scepter of righteousness *is the scepter of Your kingdom.* Hebrews 1:8

The contrast between the angels of 1:7 and the Son in 1:8 is now made. This is evidenced in the words “But to the Son *He says.*” God was speaking of (or to – the preposition in both verses can mean either) the angels in verse 7, describing their purposes as directed by Him. However now, in a citation from Psalm 45:6, 7 and concerning His Son, He says, “Your throne, O God.”

The author connects the contents of the psalm to that of the coming Messiah. If this were not the standard interpretation of this, he could not have reasonably cited it to a Hebrew audience without his words being completely rejected. But in using them, it is understood that Jewish audiences anticipated that they were to be fulfilled in Messiah. The throne of God, under the rule of Messiah, is what is spoken of here. As the Son is the Messiah, He has inherited the right to the throne

of God itself. Thus God is proclaiming that Messiah is God, and the throne of Messiah “*is forever and ever.*”

The Greek of these words is “unto the ages of ages.” The Greek *aión* signifies “an age,” or a “cycle of time.” The superlative form used here signifies “for all ages of time,” and thus unto eternity. The rule of Messiah, who is God, shall be eternal. Unlike the angels who are simply messengers which are directed to effect God’s purposes at any given time and for set reasons, the rule of Messiah is from the heavenly throne, and it is for all time and for all governance. That is seen in the next words where the author speaks of, “A scepter of righteousness.”

The scepter is the ruling instrument of a throne. It is what signifies the authority, and when pointed at a messenger, he is directed to conduct the affairs given to him. The Son bears the scepter, and He wields it in righteousness. However, the words in Greek read “THE scepter,” not “A scepter.” As Charles Ellicott says, “Righteousness itself (so to speak, the very ideal of righteous government) bears sway in Thy kingdom.” It is “The scepter of righteousness” which the author then describes as, “The scepter of Your kingdom.”

The kingdom of Messiah is the kingdom of God; He is the Lord (Yehovah). Of Him, and of His authority, Isaiah says –

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

³ His delight *is* in the fear of the Lord,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

Messiah's righteousness being "the belt of His loins" means that He is girded with it. He is wrapped and enveloped in righteousness. It is in this state that He exercises His rule. The angels, though great and powerful, have nothing on Messiah. The contrast is made, it is clear, and it is undeniable. Though this is so, the author of Hebrews will continue with words of His splendor in the verses ahead.

Life application: People in today's world use Jesus as an example of whatever pitiful cause they are pursuing. If it is to argue against the death penalty, they have a verse – pulled out of context – to justify their unrighteous stand. If it is to promote socialism, the same is the case. These people will find out (because they failed to accept the Bible as written during their lives) how mistaken they were about the righteousness of Christ Jesus. He will not allow any such unrighteous behavior, nor does He condone it now. Pay heed to the word, and be advised that it describes the unchanging Christ.

Heavenly Father, we need to know when people misuse Scripture for their own perverse purposes. It has become as common as seeing birds fly in the sky, and it shows a total disregard for Your glory and Your righteousness. Give us wisdom in how to refute such abuses, and to set the record straight about the intent of Your word. This we pray that You will always be properly exalted as shown in the Bible. Amen.

**You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” Hebrews 1:9**

The words of this verse are found in Psalm 45:7 –

“You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

Two things bear on the first words of the verse, as cited in Hebrews. First, the previous verse said, “A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.” Thus, it is inferred from those words that Christ Jesus has “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.” Secondly, the descriptions prophesied of Christ Jesus throughout the Old Testament bear witness to this same fact as well (e.g. see Isaiah 32:1 and Jeremiah 23:5). Therefore, the author knowing these things, and having known the fully righteous work of Christ under the law, next says, “Therefore.”

It is because of His faithfulness to righteousness and His hatred of lawlessness, that the author says, “God, Your God, has anointed You.” The anointing spoken of here is the anointing of a king, as the term Messiah, or “Anointed One,” relays. The word “Christ” in the Greek carries the same meaning. Because of Christ’s upholding of perfect righteousness, never failing under the Law of Moses, Christ was resurrected to eternal life. He has prevailed over death. In that, God anointed Him to His eternal kingship. In this is seen the Son’s divine glory in His exaltation. In confirmation of the excellence of the anointing, it then says, “With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

Thus far, Christ Jesus has been seen compared and contrasted to the angels. This is what is being referred to here. The angels are heavenly beings who attended to Christ during His earthly ministry, for example. But this verse must also surely refer to men as well. Any and all who are companions of the Lord, and who have served God faithfully, stand in comparison to Christ. And yet, Christ has been elevated above them all – angel and man. He stands above them in a Father/Son relationship with God. All of creation, including all creatures in creation, are subjected to the rule and authority of Christ Jesus.

Life application: Offshoot cults and aberrant sects of Christianity will always attempt to diminish the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses claim Jesus is a created being. Mormons state that Jesus was a man who became a god. Hebrews Roots adherents claim that we are obligated to follow the Law of Moses, implying that Christ's work in fulfillment of it was insufficient to save us, and implying that we need to save ourselves apart from Him. On and on it goes. Jesus Christ is God, and to Jesus Christ belongs all of our praise, honor, and glory – to the glory of God the Father.

Lord God, help us to never diminish the glory of what You have done through Jesus Christ by lessening His glory. Your word says that all should honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. If we fail to honor Christ Jesus, we fail to honor You. May this never be! Give us wisdom to always be glorifying of You through our glorifying in, and glorifying of, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And:

“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Your hands. Hebrews 1:10

The words of this verse are tied directly back to verse 8 which began with, “But to the Son *He says.*” From there, the remaining substance of verses 8 & 9 was applied to the Son of God, Jesus. The connecting Greek word *kai*, or “and,”

continues that same thought then. The words are still directed to the Son. They continue to be given to show the superiority of the Son over the angels (verse 7 & 8), but they also continue to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is, in fact, God. The words are taken from Psalm 102. This verse consists of Psalm 102:25, and the coming two verses in Hebrews will continue to follow the verses of the psalm. With the addition of “Like a cloak” in verse 12, they are almost a word for word quote from the Greek translation of the psalm.

In Psalm 102:24, the psalmist’s words speak directly to God, and the words to Him then continue to the end of the psalm. It is without a doubt that the thoughts being now ascribed to Jesus, the Son of God, are intended to show that He is the means by which God accomplished the things now stated. To use them in some type of literary fashion, without this being the intent, would be to rob God of His glory. But in understanding that Jesus is the second member of the Godhead, it exalts God. And so, with this understanding, the author begins the quote with, “You, Lord.”

The word *kurios*, or “Lord,” can have a variety of significations. However, in the case of this citation, it is speaking of LORD (Yehovah of the Old Testament). This is based on the fact that “God” of Psalm 102:24 is called LORD eight times prior to His being called “my God.” The psalmist spoke to the LORD, and then He acknowledges that the LORD is his God. The author of Hebrews accepts this, applies it to Jesus, and then goes on to say, “in the beginning.”

This is speaking of the beginning referenced in Genesis 1:1. If the Son was there at the beginning, then He was there prior to that beginning. As there is, and can be, only one God (there can only be one Necessary Being), then the Son is God. It is He who “laid the foundation of the earth.”

These words demonstrate the creative hand of the Son. It confirms He is the God of Genesis 1:1, and the same God spoken of in John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-18, and etc. There can only be one Creator. All others are contingent beings, and no contingent being can create. To understand this, and the other First Principles of

logic concerning the Creator, you can refer to this sermon:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MW2CdP4qBdE>

The author continues his quote, which is being applied to the Son, with “And the heavens are the work of Your hands.” Again, this is a direct thought from Genesis 1:1 where it is God who created the heavens and the earth. It is further seen, as noted already, that this God is the LORD (Yehovah) and that Jesus Christ is thus the incarnation of Yehovah. As already alluded to, for one to ascribe these creative efforts to a created being would be the epitome of blasphemy. It would be to rob God of His glory. But in understanding that God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ in these ways, it exalts God. As seen in a previous verse, when one exalts the Son, they are exalting the Father. There is no jealousy within the Godhead, but a complementing of one another because of the very nature of the Godhead.

Life application: If you are following these commentaries, and are still in denial that Jesus Christ is the One being spoken of in the Psalm, and thus the LORD God (Yehovah), you are basing your denial on a presupposition. You have two options: drop your presupposition, accept Christ Jesus as LORD, receiving Him as such unto salvation, or you will be condemned for believing in a false Christ. Be wise, be discerning, and call on Jesus, who is God.

Glorious God, what an amazing story the Bible tells! You were willing to step out of the eternal realm in order to redeem us. You did all that was necessary, You accomplished the work by Your own hand, and then You simply ask us to believe that what You have done through Christ Jesus is sufficient. Turn our hearts to accepting the truth of Jesus, and save us from our fallen state. We believe! We receive! Thank You, O God, for what You have done. Amen.

They will perish, but You remain;

And they will all grow old like a garment; Hebrews 1:11

The words here are found in Psalm 102:26 –

They will perish, but You will endure;

Yes, they will all grow old like a garment;

It has already been seen in just the few previous verses that the Son was there at the beginning, thus meaning he was there before the beginning in an eternal, timeless state. It has also been seen that the Son is the Creator. Additionally, it was seen in verse 3 that He is the Sustainer of the created order. Now, the eternity of the Son is highlighted with the words, “They will perish.” This is speaking of the heavens specifically, which are mentioned in the preceding verse. The events spoken of were prophesied by Isaiah –

“All the host of heaven shall be dissolved,

And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll;

All their host shall fall down

As the leaf falls from the vine,

And as *fruit* falling from a fig tree.” Isaiah 34:4

Isaiah continues to speak of such things in Isaiah 51:6. Peter speaks of these things in 2 Peter 3:12, and Revelation 21:1 says that they will surely come to pass as well –

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”

The author of Hebrews thus demonstrates that the Son is above and outside of His creation. As noted, he is specifically referring to the heavens here, but the heavens are tied to the earth in the other cited passages. If the first heaven and the first earth are to pass away, and if He was connected to them as a created being, He would not endure. And yet He will. The author then confirms the psalm by saying that unlike Him, these things “will all grow old like a garment.”

The heavens are described like a garment which, even if carefully cared for, will eventually decay, become moth-eaten, fray, break down in the weaving, etc. When this occurs, the garment needs to be replaced. This symbolism will continue on into the next verse. But so will the contrast of the Son. Everything created has potential to decay and be replaced; the Son is eternal, and has no potential to be replaced. As angels are a part of the creation (the continued subject which is being contrasted to the Son), and as the Son is the Creator, the angels – like all of creation – are dependent on the Son for their continued existence.

Life application: When we worship Jesus Christ, we are not worshiping a mere man. We are worshiping the Man who came from God. He united with His creation to redeem us; He did not leave behind His deity and simply become His creation in the process. He is and will always remain God in His divine nature.

Glorious God, the mystery of the Trinity is one which is rather difficult for us to grasp. If we talk about it long enough, we will always fall into error concerning the matter. And yet, it is what Your word teaches, in both testaments and quite clearly. Help us to accept the tenet because it is what Your word teaches, but help us to be careful in our attempts to explain it. In the end, what Your word teaches will be understood more fully in the ages to come. For now, we praise You – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Amen.

**Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.” Hebrews 1:12**

This continues the quote found in Psalm 102, specifically verses 26 & 27 –

“Like a cloak You will change them,
And they will be changed.
²⁷ But You *are* the same,
And Your years will have no end.”

The “cloak” referred to here is found only in 1 Corinthians 11:15 and in this verse. It signifies “that which is thrown around,” and thus it is a covering like a mantle or cloak as an outer garment. The “heavens” of verse 10 are said to be destined to perish, wearing out like a garment. Because of this, the Son will literally roll them up (as the Greek signifies), and in so doing, they will be changed.

In the Old Testament, the heavens are described like an expanse which is spread out. One can think of how a tent or a scroll of parchment is rolled out. This is the thought which is now being referred to, but in reverse. As they were once rolled out, they will be rolled up, and a new expanse will be revealed in their place. This will be the new heavens and the new earth that Peter speaks of in 2 Peter 3.

With this in mind, we are then given a contrast in the Son. The thing which seems so enduring, and even permanent – meaning the heavens – is destined to wear out and be replaced. But of the Son, it says, “You are the same.” The heavens change; the Son remains unchanged in the process. The amazing event of the changing of the heavens will not affect the Son. They are created matter and are thus in time. But the Son is eternal. Because of this, the author – repeating the psalm – then says, “And Your years will not fail.” The meaning is that they will never end.

Though the current heavens and earth are temporary and will come to an end, the Son is unaffected by this. Because He was prior to creation, He is outside of His creation. When the order is changed, He will continue unaffected by that change; He is immutable.

There can be no doubt as to the nature of the Son. The attributes and properties which are ascribed to the Lord God (Yehovah Elohim) of the Old Testament are now referring to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in the New. Even a child can understand what is being said here if presented with the evidence. Jesus Christ is the Lord God.

Life application: There should be no doubt in one's mind concerning the deity of Jesus. If there is, it is based on presuppositions which have been taught into that person's mind. If one comes to the Bible and simply take its words at face value, no other conclusion can be arrived at than that Jesus is the Lord God (Yehovah Elohim).

Lord God Almighty! It is You who created all things. You were there before they came into existence, and by the breath of Your mouth – by Your spoken Word – all things exist. As the world wears out, and as the heavens wear away, they will be rolled up and replaced. But You, O God, remain unchanged. We serve absolute greatness when we serve You. How great Thou art, O God! Hallelujah and Amen!

But to which of the angels has He ever said:

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Hebrews 1:13

The author has been carefully contrasting the Person of Jesus Christ to the nature, being, and authority of angels. He just showed that God, through Christ, created. That reveals that He was there before the creation. He also showed that when the

heavens grow old and are rolled up like a garment for replacement, He will be there to accomplish that task. That again reveals that He is outside and above the creation. As angels are created beings, and thus a part of the creation, Christ is “greater than” these creatures. He now contrasts them to the authority of Christ by beginning with, “But to which of the angels has He ever said.”

“He” in this verse is speaking of God. The question will be a rhetorical one. It is a question based on a statement which had been made to the Son. It is an appeal to Psalm 110, the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. It is specifically the first verse of that Psalm –

The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

Jesus Himself used these words as a point of theology when speaking to the Pharisees of Israel, and which clearly point to the divine nature of the individual being spoken about in the Psalm –

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*”

⁴³ He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

⁴⁴ ‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’?

⁴⁵ If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” Matthew 22:41-45

The point which Jesus was making is somewhat lost in the translation. The word “Lord” in this verse is translated from two different words in the Hebrew. The first is the divine name Yehovah (YHVH). The second use is from the word Adonai, meaning “My Lord” when one is speaking to Yehovah. Jesus’ question asks then,

“How is it that David calls Him “My Lord,” (meaning “Yehovah”)? David was prophesying, and the words were then recorded in Scripture. How can Yehovah be His own Son?

It is with the understanding that Christ Jesus (the Son) is Yehovah that the author of Hebrews asks His question. To which of the angels has He ever said the words which follow that opening statement in the psalm. First, it was directed to Yehovah, and Yehovah is not a created angel. Secondly, the statement says, “Sit at My right hand.” The words take us right back to verse 3 where the author said that “when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” God had “through” the Son, purged our sins. After accomplishing this, Christ Jesus was granted the position of full authority and power of God, meaning the right hand. And not only was He granted that position, but He possesses it in a state of completion of work. To “sit down” means that the work (meaning the purging of sins) is accomplished. It is as clear of a statement of eternal salvation as one can get. If our sins are purged, then we are purged of our sins. The work is accomplished, fully and completely. From there, Yehovah says for Christ to sit “Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

The work on behalf of the people of God is complete, but the enemies of God continue to wage their war. The Messiah sits at the position of authority and power until the time they are vanquished. This includes the time when He shall rule among His people during the millennium (the thousand year reign of Christ mentioned six times in Revelation 20:2-7). After that time, a new order of things will come about as described in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, and further detailed in Revelation 21 & 22.

It must be understood again that the “right hand” is not a literal position, but a position which signifies authority and power. God is Spirit. He has no parts. The mind must be cleared of thoughts of the Son sitting next to the Father in a literal sense. Christ has purged our sins, He reigns now with all authority and power, and He will continue to do so until all enemies are vanquished, the last enemy being death (1 Corinthians 15:26 & Revelation 20:14). Only then will things take on a new aspect.

The question has been asked, “To which of the angels has He ever said these things?” The answer is, “To none of them.” Christ is “greater than” the angels.

Life application: Again as in previous verses, Christ Jesus is shown to be the Lord God (Yehovah). When we acknowledge and worship the Son, we are giving glory to the Father. When we fail to give glory to the Son, we fail to give glory to the Father. Imagine those cults and aberrant sects who continuously pretend to glorify God while ignoring the Son. They have missed the key element of what God has done in the world for our salvation. Although it sounds pious to pray to Yehovah (YHVH) and make a pretense about a relationship with Him in this way, it is dishonoring of God to do so when Jesus is not included as the focal point of our worship of Yehovah.

Lord God, thank You so very much for granting us the glorious privilege of seeing You in the Person of Jesus. In Him, we have everything we need to understand You personally, intimately, and fully. Without Him, we are left with a void in our understanding of who You are and the glory You have accomplished for us. Thank You for our beloved Jesus – the Way, the Truth, and the Life! Thank You, O God. Amen.

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Hebrews 1:14

The question here, speaking of the angels, is actually tied directly to verse 7. In that verse, two words were used which are now repeated in this verse –

1:7 –And of the angels He says:

“Who makes His angels spirits
And His ministers a flame of fire.”

1:14 – Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Further, the Greek word in verse 7 for “angel” (*aggelos*) is a noun which signifies a messenger. The Greek word in verse 14 for “sent forth” (*apostelló*) is a verb signifying the sending forth of a messenger. Everything about the wording chosen by the author is given in contrast to Christ who directs the angels, as opposed to the angels who are so directed. Further, it is Christ who brought about salvation through the purging of sin (verse 3), but it is the angels who minister (to Him) for those who will inherit salvation.

The construction of the verse in most English translations gives the sense that the service is “to” man. This is not the intent of the words. The service is “to God” as they are continually (the verb is a present participle, indicating on-going action) sent forth for those who will inherit salvation. As the service is “to God,” meaning the Son (as is noted in verse 7), then it is showing their subordinate position to Christ Jesus. Again, the supremacy of the authority and power of Christ is on full display in these words.

Understanding the structure now, we can see that the word “all” is an absolute term. Christ is elevated above every angel, and all are in subjection to Him. Every one of them is directed according to His will. Theirs is a function of service. The Greek word is *leitourgikos*, and it is only found here in the Bible. However, it is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament concerning those who served in the temple. It signified a “divinely-authorized (service) referring to sacred ministering that performs what is *acceptable to the all-holy God*” (HELPS Word Studies). It is where our modern term “liturgy” comes from. These heavenly beings perform a service to God, just as the human ministers performed to Him in His earthly dwelling.

As these beings are serving God and “for those who will inherit salvation,” we see that their duties are based on the now-complete redemptive work which Christ accomplished in His purging of our sins. It is He who secured our salvation; it is they who serve Him for the salvation we will inherit. The highlight is on Christ

Jesus, and our Savior's greatness in this regard will continue to be brought to light as we move into Chapter 2.

Life application: As was noted in the explanation of verse 3, it is not merely that man is a *part* of creation, but that he is the *point* of creation. Jesus created, He sustains His creation, and He died for His creatures to redeem them. He now sends forth angels according to His will for those who will inherit that salvation. When we consider this, it makes the work of Jesus Christ all the more amazing. Let us consider the love which is displayed in the workings of God in Christ, and let us be humble before Him, ever grateful for the marvel and the magnificence of what He has done.

Lord God, precious heavenly Father, from the breath of Your spoken word, all of creation came into existence. You possess all things, and You control all things. And yet, You still sent Jesus to redeem us when it is we who turned from You. For the endless ages to come, we will surely never be able to grasp the depth of the love You have for Your redeemed. To do what You have done is simply beyond comprehension. And so, dwell in our thanks and our praises. Be pleased, O God, to receive eternal thanks and praise from Your people. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. Hebrews 2:1

With the thoughts of Chapter 1 complete, the author now introduces a connecting link to what is coming. This is evidenced by the word “Therefore.” It looks back, expecting the reader to contemplate what has been said. Chapter 1 dealt clearly and precisely with the deity of Christ Jesus and His superiority over the heavenly host of angels. It further spoke about how the message of God was transmitted in the past, but how it is transmitted now (meaning through the Son of God). The revelation of the Son is far superior to the revelation received through the prophets.

This is what we are to consider, and this is what will then look forward to what lies ahead as the author continues. Before he does though, he says – based on the contents of Chapter 1 – that “we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard.” The words, “the more earnest heed,” signify “abundantly.” We are to hold our minds completely on “the things we have heard.”

Because Jesus Christ is God, and because He is superior even to the angels who speak with great authority – even with the authority that comes directly from Him at times – we must pay heed to the words concerning Christ. He has come, He has been revealed for who He truly is, and He has ushered in a New Covenant in His blood. The author will spend much of the book of Hebrews explaining the superiority of this New Covenant over the Old. He will explain what it means to fall back under the Old to the individual. This is all being prepared by him by first laying out the nature and authority of Christ Jesus. What He has said, or what has been relayed concerning Him, bears a dignity which far surpasses any revelation prior to His coming, and it is to be regarded especially worthy of our full attention.

If this full attention isn't given, something else is bound to occur. As the author says, "lest we drift away." The word translated here as "drift away" is used only this once in the Bible, and there is a great deal of conjecture as to its true intent. It comes from two words which signify "close beside" and "to flow." And so no matter what mental image is given, the idea is that something is near, and it moves away from being near. A ring can slip off a finger and be lost. A boat can be improperly moored and float out to sea because of the movement of the tide. Thus, the author is signifying that if we do not pay heed to the message of Christ, we will slip away from God's mooring in Christ to an open ocean. We will be theologically tossed about on the waves of bad doctrine, and eventually, we will be wrecked on the shores of heresy.

Thus, there is this strong warning and contrast to giving the more earnest heed. Giving heed means security, pleasing God, and life. Drifting away will lead to uncertainty, displeasing God, and death.

Life application: The book of Hebrews reveals Christ. He is God. To not give heed to this (such as the Jehovah's Witnesses) is to deny God. The book reveals that the New Covenant supersedes the Old. To fall back on the Old (such as Judaizers and Hebrew Roots movement adherents do) is to reject the completed work of Christ. On and on it will go. There is a sound anchor in Christ; there is drifting away to bad doctrine and heresy by not holding to the truth of Christ. Be wise, be faithful to God, and cling to Jesus alone.

Gracious heavenly Father, give us wisdom to refute those who teach that which is false concerning Your expectations for mankind. We are called "haters" and "unloving" for proclaiming what Your word proclaims. When that happens, we want to retreat. But in the end, all we need to do is to simply say, "This is God's words; take it up with Him." Our obedience to You is not hating. Rather, it is the most loving thing we can do. We are proclaiming the only path to salvation. How could that be wrong! No indeed. It is a mark of true love. Help us then to be faithful to Your word. Amen.

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

The word “For” is given to make a contrast between the word spoken by angels to that which comes through the Son. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater. It next says, “if the word spoken through angels.” Scholars generally argue that this is speaking of the Law of Moses as having been given through the mediation of angels (meaning heavenly beings). The way Bibles are translated, Stephen seems to allude to this in Acts 7:53. Likewise, Paul also seems to allude to it in Galatians 3:19. In this, it is argued that the Lord communicated the law through angels (meaning heavenly beings) to Moses. However, there is nothing to suggest this. Rather, the law was spoken by the Lord directly to the people (Exodus 20:1), or he spoke out the law face to face with Moses (Exodus 33:11 & Numbers 12:8). From Moses, it was conveyed directly, or along with Aaron, to the people.

The word “angel” simply means “messenger.” In the case of the Law of Moses, it is Moses and Aaron who conveyed the words of the Lord to the people. They acted as the angels, or messengers, of the Lord. Later during the time of the law, it is seen that angels, such as Gabriel and Michael, also spoke out words to certain people though. Further, prophets and seers continued to receive the word, passing it along to the people. The point of what is being said here is that “the word,” meaning the law, was “spoken through angels.” The Lord spoke, and His chosen messengers – be it Moses and Aaron, the prophets, or heavenly angels – relayed His word to the people. And this word “proved steadfast.”

Despite being conveyed to the people through a secondary source, it remained the word of the Lord, and it was considered inviolable. It was set, established, and firm. As Albert Barnes says, “It did not yield to circumstances.” If a violation of the law occurred, there was either a punishment to be meted out, a sacrifice to be made, or a covering over of the sin would be required on the Day of Atonement. When any portion of the law was broken, the entire law was broken (James 2:10). Jesus said as much concerning the law –

“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Matthew 5:18

Understanding this, the author then notes that “every transgression and disobedience received a just reward.” The word translated as “transgression” is a compound word which signifies “an overstepping.” It signifies a willful disregard of the law of God which defies His set drawn-lines. In this, one could think of the violation of a specific command concerning something forbidden – “You shall not.” The word translated as “disobedience” is also a compound word in the Greek. It signifies that which rises up from a negative attitude, such as one who refuses to properly pay heed to what is said. In this, one could think of the violation of a general command concerning something expected – “You shall.” In such violations of the law, for the offender, there was a “just reward.”

The idea of this is that a repayment of a price due was to be expected. It is a compensation which corresponds to a set standard. One can think of a reward for living in faith, or for punishment when failing to meet a set standard. God is the Source, He sets the standard, and rewards or punishments are set based on that. The Law of Moses was a set standard, and though it was spoken indirectly to the people (apart from the Ten Commandments), it was expected to be adhered to. The “from a lesser to a greater” will be seen in the coming verses.

Life application: The Law of Moses had its expectations. To show the severity of violating its standards, examples of punishment for infractions are given. For example, the first recorded Sabbath-breaker was taken out and stoned. Likewise, a person was stoned for speaking blasphemy. This was what was expected. The explicitly named penalty for numerous laws was given. If the law was this great, and yet something greater is found in the word of the Son, how carefully then should we pay heed to the message which comes from Him, or those who proclaim Him!

Lord God, where can salvation be found apart from Jesus Christ? The answer is given right in Your word. It is not attainable. All salvation in history was looking by faith to the coming Messiah, or it is looking back on the Messiah who has come. Only by faith in Him is man restored to You. Help us not to put our trust in deeds of our own doing, but to faithfully trust in the full and final work of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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

The previous verse noted the steadfast nature of the word which was “spoken through angels.” If there was a transgression of it, or disobedience toward it, there was to be a just reward for the violation. That now leads to an obvious question. If that is so with the word spoken through angels (meaning messengers), then “how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?” It is a rhetorical question which expresses denial. Q: “How shall we escape?” A: “Indeed, we shall not escape.”

In other words, the author has been carefully showing the supremacy of the Son over the angels. This consumed much of the body of Chapter 1. It was made perfectly evident that the Son is the Lord God. And so if the angels transmitted a word which was to be carefully adhered to, and if that word was violated, one could expect to receive a just penalty, how much more just would the penalty be for neglecting the salvation offered by the Lord? The difference between “word” of verse 2:2 and “salvation” of this verse shows the strong contrast. The angels spoke a word; the Son offers salvation. The word expects obedience or punishment will result; the Son offers salvation or condemnation will result.

It is one thing to sin against God by violating His law. It is an action which leads to separation from God. If no remedy for that sin is provided, then there would naturally be a continued separation from Him. However, the law provided

atonement for sin, and so a recovery of the relationship was possible. However, in the coming of Christ, a rejection of Him leaves no possible recovery. He is the full and final remedy which the law only pointed to. That will be explained as the book of Hebrews continues. To neglect the only remedy to the disease which infects us means to be wholly consumed by it.

From there, the salvation is noted by the author with the words, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.” It seems like a peculiar way of speaking at first, but it is the “beginning” of it by the Lord which is being emphasized. The Greek literally reads, “seeing that it, having at the first been spoken.” The Lord began to speak the message (John was only a herald of Christ who would present the gospel), and that message was then carried on by the apostles. That is noted with the words, “and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*.”

The apostles confirmed the word which was at first spoken by the Lord. They became His witnesses to that which they heard and saw. From there, they carried the message out to others, explaining what had occurred, and showing how it was the fulfillment of everything that had been anticipated in the Scriptures.

It is this verse which some use to dispel the idea that Paul is the author of Hebrews. He states in Galatians 1:12 that he received his instruction directly from Jesus Christ by revelation. He also notes elsewhere that he had personally seen the risen Christ. As this is so, and as the author includes himself in this verse with the word “us,” then how could the author be Paul? However, Paul heard the message in Acts 7 at the stoning of Stephen. He certainly heard it by other Jews as he had them arrested. The gospel was, in fact, confirmed to him by those who “at the first began” to speak it. This verse doesn’t deny his other claims of having been instructed by the Lord. Instead, it simply says that the Lord began to speak the message, and then that message was confirmed by the apostles who continued to speak it out. His later reception of doctrine directly from the Lord in no way negates the fact that he first heard the gospel from other apostles and disciples, such as Stephen.

In fact, as an apostle, his words are now being used in the letter to confirm that same word to others who must then make their own decision concerning Jesus Christ. The argument that it cannot be Paul who is writing the epistle breaks down when the words he pens are properly considered. Whether he wrote it or not is unknown, but this verse cannot be used as a confirmation that he didn't write it.

It should be noted that it is a rare thing in Hebrews for Jesus to be termed "the Lord." Normally, he is spoken of as "the Son," or He is spoken of by the position which He is said to fill (such as High Priest). However, in order to make it absolutely certain that "the Son" is "the Lord," the particular designation is made here. It thus provides a special dignity to the salvation spoken of. As He is the Lord, in rejecting Him, where else could one go? The answer is obvious. There is nowhere else one can go. Salvation is limited to that which is offered through Jesus Christ alone.

Life application: The message of Jesus Christ is an exclusive message. In the modern world, that is deemed as a politically incorrect thought. People don't want limitations of any kind set on them. However, man is responsible to God, not the other way around. If God has determined that salvation is through Christ alone, then that is the way it is. Be fixed and firm in your presentation of the Gospel. When difficult questions arise which you don't have the answer to, you still must be firm about those things you do have the answer to. Never waffle in your stand that Jesus Christ alone is the way to being reconciled to God.

Heavenly Father, we are not all theologians with answers to the deeper questions of the faith, but we are all accountable for the basic truths which come with the faith, such as Jesus Christ being the only way to salvation. Even if we can't answer all of the questions that are presented to us, we can be fixed and firm in what we do know. May we never water down the gospel which says that salvation is only found by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Give us the fortitude to stand on this basic message, because it is the only hope for mankind. Help us in this, O God. Amen.

God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? Hebrews 2:4

These words continue the question began in verse 2. All taken together, they read –

“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”

The words, “God also bearing witness,” are speaking about the “salvation” in verse 2, meaning the gospel message. The author’s claim is confirmed by the words of Mark 16:20 –

“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

As can be seen both in Hebrews and in Mark, God confirmed the message of salvation found in Jesus with “signs.” A “sign” is something (usually miraculous) which is particularly given to confirm or authentic something else. As HELPS Word Studies notes, a sign “then emphasizes the end-purpose which exalts the one giving it. Accordingly, it is used dozens of times in the NT for what *authenticates the Lord and His eternal purpose*, especially by doing what mere man cannot replicate or take credit for.”

God is also said to have borne witness through “wonders.” A wonder is an extraordinary event with a supernatural effect being left upon any who witness it. A portent from heaven would be a wonder.

God further bore witness through” various miracles.” The word “miracle” as used here signifies power which comes through God’s ability. In using God’s ability to perform or accomplish something, the result is something that could not otherwise have been accomplished by the individual.

Along with these, God confirmed the gospel message of salvation through Christ Jesus by “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” The Greek signifies “distributions.” God distributed the effective working of the Holy Spirit according to His chosen purpose. Some spoke in tongues, some performed healings, and so on. God did this in order to confirm that Jesus, whom these individuals proclaimed, was and is the Messiah. And all of this was “according to His own will.”

The workings of God mentioned in this verse were all at His sovereign discretion. There are times when the apostles could not heal (see Philippians 2:25-30; 1 Timothy 5:23; & 2 Timothy 4:20, for example). There are times when tongues are inappropriate (see 1 Corinthians 14:27-30). The signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit which came to the apostles were for particular reasons, at particular times, and always to confirm God’s word concerning the saving message of Christ Jesus. This is in contrast to how the “word spoken through angels” was received and confirmed.

The lesson here is that if there was a punishment for infractions of the law, how much more can we expect that God will more severely deal with a rejection of the gospel! Trifling with the message of Jesus Christ, mishandling the word which speaks of Him, and using false signs, miracles, and demonstrations of “gifts” of the Spirit are instances deserving of the highest degree of censure from Him.

Life application: The word has been confirmed. The Bible is written, and it speaks of those things which came to pass in order to reveal the truth of Jesus. There is no longer a need for signs, miracles, wonders, and distributions of the Holy Spirit in the manner that came during the apostolic age, nor should they be expected. If someone is sick, we should pray for them, but we should never arrogantly “claim” healing. It is God who decides, according to His wisdom to hear and respond. The gifts we now possess are on a different level than during the apostolic age, and

they are to be used to the glory of God. Be wise concerning false teachers, false healers, and false miracle workers. Stick to the word which reveals all we need to know to have faith in the Son.

Heavenly Father, You have confirmed Your word to the people of the world through the apostles You sent forth after Jesus' ministry. Now, we are asked to live by faith in that same word which has been written as a testimony of His authority. Help us to not follow after false teachers who claim the miraculous. We have Your word, and it is sufficient. Thank You for the surety we possess because of it! Amen.

For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. Hebrews 2:5

The word "For" here is given as an explanatory marker. The author has shown that the salvation provided by Jesus, and which pertains to men, is much greater than the "word spoken through angels." What had previously been enacted was temporary, but the salvation which comes through Christ Jesus (the Son) is forever. Thus, His rule is also forever (as is explicitly stated in verse 1:8). In this new order of things, verse 1:14 said that the angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation."

With this understanding, he continues with, "He has not put the world to come." A similar phrase is seen in Hebrews 6:5. Some translations actually make it the same by saying "the world to come." Others more rightly translate it as, "the age to come." The reason is that two different words are used. Here, in verse 2:5, it is speaking of the inhabited world. There, it is speaking of the age of time reaching into the future. The author says that the "world" to come, meaning the inhabited earth, is that "of which we speak." He is conveying his thoughts while using the plural to include his audience. He is ensuring that all are on the same page concerning the issue at hand.

It is this world to come which “He has not put ... in subjection to angels.” This returns to the thought of verse 1:14 (as noted above). The idea here is that he first cited verse 1:14. Then he showed the supremacy of what Christ brought about in His work related to salvation, being greater than that of which the angels spoke out; and then he has said that the world to come, which is based on His work of salvation, will not be in subjection to angels. Instead, it will be in subjection to Him, and the angels will minister to man on His behalf. This “world to come” certainly speaks of the millennium. The author is speaking to a Jewish audience about what has been promised to them in their own Scriptures. The distinction to be made is between the current arrangement and that which will be realized in Christ’s second coming.

This must speak of the time of the millennium, because in verse 2:8, he will note that all things will be in subjection to Him. The same idea is stated in 1 Corinthians 15:24-27. This includes death itself. However, death is not said to be cast into the lake of fire until after the millennium. Therefore, the “world to come” is referring to the millennium, and it then extends beyond that when death is finally gone forever.

Life application: It is hard to imagine how replacement theologians can ignore a literal millennial period of reign by Messiah, but they do. However, the author of Hebrews is addressing a Jewish audience who were (and who are) expecting a dispensation where Messiah will rule on earth. They expect this because this is what their Scriptures proclaim, and it is what the author of Hebrews clearly indicates is coming. Don’t be misled into accepting the idea that the church has replaced Israel. The Bible never proclaims this, in either testament.

Lord God, it is a remarkable day which lies ahead when Christ Jesus will rule for a thousand years among Israel. They shall be the head of the nations, and the promises to them will all be fulfilled in the most remarkable way. We must be close! Israel is back in her land, the church is quickly falling away from sound doctrine, and the world is about to receive its just due for its perverse conduct. As You have spoken, so it is coming to pass. Thank You that we have full assurance of our faith because of the prophetic word! Praises to You, O God. Amen.

**But one testified in a certain place, saying:
What is man that You are mindful of him,**

Or the son of man that You take care of him? Hebrews 2:6

The author is still speaking of the contrast between the authority of angels and that of the Son. In order to show the supremacy of the Son, he now refers to the 8th Psalm. In this though, he uses an unusual literary technique by saying, “But one testified in a certain place, saying.”

The word “testified” gives the sense of an earnest testimony which thoroughly bears witness to something. The word “certain place,” is better translated as “somewhere.” The Greek word is *pou*. It is the genitive case of an indefinite pronoun *pos*. It is wholly indefinite. The question raised then is, “Why would the author not simply say, “In the psalms,” or something more definite. It is the same term he uses in Hebrews 4:4 –

“For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.’”

Charles Ellicott gives a sound reason for the wording by saying, “As a rule, the words of Scripture are in this Epistle quoted as God’s own utterances; and though the nature of the quotation (which is an address to God) made this impossible here, the writer seems to gladly avoid the mention of the human prophet, perhaps as distracting the thought from the divine prophecy.”

The author (most probably Paul) is writing to a Hebrew audience. In order to ensure that the citation is carefully handled as the word of God, though spoken through a prophet (who is speaking to God), he defers to this literary technique. It then makes sure that his use of the quote is still rightly considered as from a divine source (thus “testified” is being applied to God’s testimony because it is recorded in His word). He then next cites the intended words, beginning with Psalm 8:4 which says, “What is man that You are mindful of him.”

David is speaking to the Lord (Yehovah). He is in awe of the magnificence of the creation which is so splendid and glorious. And yet, God with all of creation to tend to and to rejoice in, still takes notice of man. It seemed almost incomprehensible to David that God would even consider man at all, much less dwell among him (meaning among Israel in the sanctuary) and reveal His thoughts to him (meaning through prophets). This is especially so because man had rebelled against God, and he continued to do so every chance he could get. David was overwhelmed with the idea that God could direct His attention to man considering all of this.

The author continues to cite David's words of Psalm 8:4 with the words, "Or the son of man that You take care of him?" The term "son of man" is still speaking of man – the ongoing issue of one man to the next. God created Adam, and the details of Genesis 1 & 2 show that man had special value to, and a purposeful relationship with, God. However, Adam turned from God. How could He still then be mindful of him after that? And more, Adam's sons continued to rebel, even getting worse and worse. Each time God would intervene and call man back to Himself in a new way, directing the steps of humanity as if there was a greater purpose for him. The Greek word for "take care" is one which indicates divine visitation. It isn't just that the Lord throws him food to eat and walks away, but that He inspects him, visits him, and ensures that he will be OK. David pondered the matter, realizing that there must be more to man than his simply being an animal that could be slaughtered for food or put in a zoo to be gazed at. Instead, there is a quality of man that actually makes him important to God in a most profound way.

The author will continue citing the psalm, directing our attention to the one Man who is the point and purpose of God's attention to man.

Life application: When we are told to go out into the world in order to spread the gospel, it is because man (all men, from every tribe and nation) have value to God. It is man who devalues himself through his vile conduct and senseless rejection of God. But if man can be turned from that, there is a great and eternal purpose for him in God's economy. Let us look at our fellow humans with eyes that match those of the Lord, wanting all to be saved and to eternally fellowship with Him.

Lord God, the gospel is a message intended for all men of every color, culture, and condition. It is not a message which is forced on others, insisting they submit to Your rule. Instead, it is a message of love, calling out that we willingly return to You. This is the greatness of the gospel. You have allowed us to return willingly and to be reconciled to You, even though You have done all that is necessary to make it happen. What a wonderful offer of peace and reconciliation! Thank You for this display of love. Amen.

You have made him a little lower than the angels;

You have crowned him with glory and honor,

And set him over the works of Your hands. Hebrews 2:7

The author continues with his quote of Psalm 8. The words here are from the Greek translation of Psalm 8:5. The quote begins by saying, “You have made him a little lower than the angels.” The word translated as “a little” signifies “short” or “a few.” In this, it is speaking in a sense of quantity or measure. The idea is as Vincent’s Word Studies translates the sentence – “Thou didst for some little time make him lower than the angels.”

The translation could go either way – speaking of time, or speaking of position – however, the author is using the words of the psalmist and applying them to Christ Jesus, and contrasting Him to the angels. Therefore, the reasonable thought is that Christ came into the stream of humanity in the form of a bondservant (see Philippians 2:5-11). During His first advent, He was thus “for some little time” made lower than the angels. He subjected Himself to the economy which was “spoken through angels” (Hebrews 2:2). Thus, Christ subjected Himself to a position inferior to them in a legal sense, being bound by the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets.

As a short note of clarification, the Hebrew of these words in Psalm 8 literally reads, “And lower You have made him than God.” David placed man lower than “God/gods” The word is *elohim*. It signifies something like “other(s) who are ‘over there.’” It can speak of God, angels, or even human judges. What David was actually referring to isn’t completely sure, but the translators of the Greek Scriptures state “angels,” and the author of Hebrews agrees with this in the New Testament. In this, the assumption is that David was using the term *elohim* as an ellipsis for “the angels of God.” This is likely because no definite article is placed in front of *elohim* by David.

Having said this, the context of the psalm must be considered. David wrote about the glory of man (as noted in the previous verse of Hebrews). He wondered that God was even mindful of him and that He tended so carefully to him. When David said, “You have made him a little lower than the angels,” he was referring to the state of man in the order of ranking. God is supreme. From there, the host of angels were considered as a higher order than man, having access to His throne, and wielding great power and authority. Man, as an earthly creature, would be considered as “a little lower than the angels.” But David (and the author of Hebrews) continues with, “You have crowned him with glory and honor.”

It is impossible to tell exactly what David was thinking, and so we can only speculate that he is referring to man in general. However, he may also have been looking in anticipation to the coming Messiah. Either way, the author of Hebrews leaves no doubt as to the true intent of the Spirit-inspired writings. It is the Messiah who is being referred to in the future/prophetic sense. As for David’s immediate context, we can speculate, without causing any damage to the intent of David, that he was speaking of man in general.

Despite being “a little lower than the angels,” man has been crowned with “glory and honor.” He has been given authority over the realm in which he exists, and it is apparent that he is the highest form of life that walks upon the earth. This thought is explained by the continued words of the verse. They say, “And set him over the works of Your hands.”

They are words taken from Psalm 8:6, and it is to be noted that some manuscripts, and thus many modern Bibles, omit the final words of this clause. Whether they were inappropriately dropped out of the citation, or whether they were inappropriately added in at a later date is a subject of debate. However, the overall intent will not be lost, because the next verse in both the Psalm and in Hebrews will complement the words. Under the assumption that the words do, in fact, belong in the verse, David has noted that man has been set over the works of God's hands, meaning the earth on which we live. This authority was given at the creation of man (Genesis 2:20), and it was restated after the flood of Noah (Genesis 9:1-3). David understood this, and wrote about man in this position, lower than the angels, but with authority over the works of God's hands.

The author of Hebrews, and quite possibly David as well, looked to these words in an even greater context though. The author is applying them to Christ, having first been subjected to the economy which was administered by angels, and who then was crowned with glory and honor. He prevailed over (and died in fulfillment of) the Law of Moses. From there, and in the fullest intent of the passage, Christ was placed "over the works of" God's hands. He was granted the full authority, power, and position that rightfully belonged to Him, and which He temporarily set aside. He reclaimed that authority through His completed work. This is the intent of the passage, as the coming verses will continue to reveal.

Whatever David was actually thinking as he wrote out the Psalm, the Holy Spirit who directed him had the intent of it being a prophetic passage which looked forward to Christ Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the words (see John 5:39).

Life application: We cannot get inside the head of David, or other Old Testament writers, and be dogmatic about what they were thinking at times. However, when an Old Testament passage is cited by a New Testament writer, and it is then applied to the Person of Jesus Christ, we can know – with 100% surety – that either the primary or the secondary (or both) intent of the original was to point to the coming Messiah. The truth is revealed in how the New Testament, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, applies these verses. We don't need to argue dogmatically over what is unknown. All we need to do is stand confidently in what is known.

Lord God, there are difficult passages in the Old Testament which we can debate as to their actual original meaning, but when they are applied to Christ Jesus in the New Testament, all doubt as to the prophetic meaning is cleared up. We have a sure word that the Old pointed to the New, and that Christ is the fulfillment of what was spoken so long ago. Thank You for the absolute assurance we have in the full, final, and finished work of Christ our Lord! Amen.

You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. Hebrews 2:8

The author now finishes his Old Testament citation with words from Psalm 8:6 –

“You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet.”

This is, like Psalm 102, written by David. Here as before, David may simply have been thinking of the state of man in general. He has been given authority over the earth, and all things in the earth are in subjection to him. The reason this is probably what was on David’s mind is because of what he continues to say in the psalm –

“All sheep and oxen—
Even the beasts of the field,
⁸The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.” Psalm 8:7-8

David stood in awe of the fact that the Lord had given man – disobedient man – the authority over such a marvelous part of His creation. However, as already seen in the previous verses, there is an immediate context, and there is a future context. Whether David was also thinking of the Messiah to come or not, the Spirit spoke through David with this intent. And the author of Hebrews clearly presents his citation as such.

Jesus came under the authority of the Law of Moses, but He prevailed over it (Colossians 1:15). In this, all authority and power were given to Him. In one sense then, God “put all things under his feet.” After citing this, the author then says what that means in the context of Messiah. David intended his words to mean all creatures of the earth, however, the Spirit looked to a greater fulfillment in Christ Jesus. The author shows this by saying, “For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him.”

It is revealed that the actual intent of the psalm is that “all” is in the complete sense. Everything, without exception, is put in subjection to Jesus Christ. This includes man, the heavenly powers, etc. Everything that exists in creation has been put in subjection to Christ by God. However, the author next contrasts the current state of things concerning the authority of Christ, and what is actual in regards to that authority at this time by saying, “But now we do not yet see all things put under him.” As of now, that ideal which is proclaimed has not yet become reality.

Though God has granted full authority to Christ, with all things put under Him, that has not yet been fully realized in its totality. Man continues to rebel against Him. The devil and his demons continue to fight against Him. Death, though conquered in Christ, still has power over man. Someday, the devil, death, and Hades will be cast into the Lake of Fire, but that has not yet occurred. It is 100% assured that these things will come to pass, but they have not yet come to pass.

Life application: We need to be able to differentiate between things that are potential and things that are actual. Likewise, we need to understand the idea vs. the reality concerning Christ’s authority. Though something is stated as an

accomplished fact, it does not mean that it has actually been realized yet. The reason this is important is because we are still living in a fallen world where bad things continue to occur. If we inappropriately apply verses which actually only apply to the future to our theology concerning the current state of things, we will have an unbalanced view of the world in which we live. In this, when bad things do occur, our faith can easily be shaken. This is the problem with the doctrine of some. They take ideals which are not actualized, and they apply them in a careless manner to our current world. In this, they set themselves up for a certain fall concerning their walk with the Lord. Jesus tells us that in this world we will have tribulation. Paul's writings continue to confirm that. This is what we are to expect until Christ comes for us.

Lord God Almighty, You have granted Christ full authority over all things, but all things are not yet in subjection to Him. Help us to see the difference between the two, and to not make unfounded assumptions or conclusions in our present walk. We are bound to have troubles, trials, and tribulations because the devil is still actively working out his evil schemes. Help us to live by faith, and to understand that the better life You have promised is yet ahead. Until then, may our faith not falter in times of difficulty. Amen.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9

The order of this verse in most Bibles doesn't follow the Greek. There is an emphasis that is thus lacking. A few translations get it right though, such as the YLT –

“and him who was made some little less than messengers we see -- Jesus -- because of the suffering of the death, with glory and honour having been crowned, that by the grace of God for every one he might taste of death.”

The thought of verse 2:7 is repeated here. There it said, “You have made him a little lower than the angels.” As noted, this is speaking of the time-frame of being born under the law; a law ministered by angels (messengers). He was placed in this position under the law and the purpose of that was “for the suffering of death.” Christ came to live out the law, perfectly fulfilling its every precept. As Leviticus 18:5 says –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.”

No person had, or has, met the standards of the law, and thus no man can “live by them.” With the giving of the law, all stood condemned before God, except for His gracious offering of a Day of Atonement which temporarily – year by year – covered over their sins. This will be explained as Hebrews continues. However, Christ was initially capable of taking away sin fully and forever because He was born without original sin. Being born under the law meant that if He could also live out the law perfectly, He would be qualified to do so. The gospels bear out that He was both born and lived without sin, and was thus capable and qualified. That left only one remaining element. Was He willing to do so? The gospels bear witness that He was –

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” John 10:17, 18

Christ’s suffering of death was for the sin of the world. This is the doctrine of substitution, a doctrine given under the Law of Moses. The life of a perfect, pure, and innocent animal could be substituted in the place of the sinner. Each of these animals only looked forward to Christ. Their deaths were anticipatory of the final Sacrifice of Christ Jesus (see Hebrews 10:4). Christ came in fulfillment of these types and shadows, gave His life to take away sin, and then rose again because He had no sin of His own. In His completed work, validated by the resurrection, He was “crowned with glory and honor.”

This is the return of Christ to the position He had left. He was exalted to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33), meaning the position of all power and authority. The message of the Bible is that only God can take away sin. That message is fulfilled in Christ, who is God, coming for a little while and placing Himself under His perfect standard. In fulfilling that, He (meaning the Man Jesus who is also God) took away our sin. In this, it was “by the grace of God.”

Grace is unmerited favor. We did not deserve what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. He destroyed the whole world by flood, consigning all but eight people on earth to their fate. Though He promised to never destroy the world by flood again, He was (and is) under no obligation to save a single person from their inevitable doom. And yet He, through Jesus, did just that. Jesus is the grace of God spoken of here. It is He who “might taste death for everyone.”

This does not say that He did taste death for everyone, but that He might do so. These words clearly show the folly of the Calvinist doctrine of “limited atonement.” The Greek words *huper pantos* signify “on behalf of the whole (everyone).” The scope of Christ’s substitutionary death is unlimited. No person is excepted from what He has done. He has *potentially* died for all. But there is still the issue of free will.

There are those who will accept what God has done in Christ, and there are those who will reject it. There are also those who simply never heard the gospel and who are left unsaved. All are *potentially* saved by Christ, but not all *actually* are. Though His atonement is unlimited in scope, it is limited in actuality. In essence, “God chose everyone in Christ, but not everyone will choose God’s offering of Christ.”

The argument that asks, “What about the person who has never heard of Jesus?” is an invalid argument. They neither deserve God’s grace (grace is unmerited favor), nor do they deserve His mercy. Christ tasted death for everyone, but it is up to those who hear the saving message of Christ to receive it, and it is up to those who have received it to tell others about it.

Christ “tasted” death, as if He drank its bitterness from a cup. We can be freed from this because of the work of Christ. We can instead drink from the Fount of life, Christ. In this, we are given the guarantee of eternal life. If He has tasted death for His elect, then they can never die (be spiritually separated from the Father) again. This then touches on the folly of the Arminian doctrine of salvation. Their claim is that a person who is saved can then lose that salvation. That is also seen to be false. Christ’s work restores life, once and forever, to the person who comes to Jesus.

Life application: Jesus did not die for some, but for all. The choice is up to each who hears as to whether they will receive Him or not. The responsibility is up to each who receives Him to continue telling others about what He has done. Further, Jesus did not come to grant us eternal insecurity. Rather, we have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and we are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Doctrine actually matters. Don’t be swayed by those who teach erroneous messages which deny the full, final, and finished work of Jesus Christ. When you call on Christ, you are saved – once and forever.

Lord God, You have granted people the right to choose the gift of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice or to reject it. Let us be wise and accept the gift. And Lord God, for those who have received Jesus, the deal is done. The salvation He provides is not one of eternal insecurity. Instead, we are saved forever by the Author of eternal salvation. Thank You for the surety we possess in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Hebrews 2:10

The word “For” is based on the previous verse which spoke of Christ’s “suffering of death.” The Hebrew audience is being instructed more perfectly on the nature of God. As Jews, they expected a conquering king. This theme, based on the

exploits and history of David, was their ideal for the coming Messiah. But before the crown came the cross.

Continuing, the author says “it was fitting for Him.” This is speaking of God. To Him, there is a rightness, an order, and a propriety in the way in which Messiah was brought from suffering to glory. It is, by the very nature of God, the way that it should be. Before the world was created, the plan was set in motion. Thus, it is an eternal design which reflects God’s eternal mind.

Understanding this, the author next explains that it is God “for whom *are* all things.” Vincent’s Word Studies explains this by saying, “For whom, that is, for whose sake all things exist. God is the final cause of all things.” Everything that exists does so because it finds its ultimate reason in Him. As God created the world for man to dwell on it, then man’s existence must have a reason which is for God. It is to God that man’s existence is to be directed.

Further, the author continues that it is God “by whom *are* all things.” This is the creative effort of God. He is the One who accomplished the act of creation. There was nothing, and by God’s wisdom, order, and power, all things came into existence and exist as they now are. In these two thoughts – “for whom” and “by whom” – we find that God is the initiator and the final reason for creation. As man’s existence is to be directed to Him (the reason for his existence), then the cross (Christ’s “suffering of death”) is how God has determined that it should most gloriously come about.

It was through the cross that he has brought “many sons to glory.” The idea here is one of a superlative abundance. It is God’s design that the cross of Christ would be the cherished way that man would understand His love and draw many to Him through it. These words are again a stab directly at the heart of the Calvinist idea of predestination and election. God did not merely choose some for salvation and disregard the rest (limited atonement). Rather, He sent Christ to the cross so that the entire body of humanity would have a chance to hear the message and willingly respond to it.

Unlike Islam which teaches submission through force – which is practically the idea of Calvinistic predestination (irresistible grace resulting in limited atonement) because man is supposedly converted apart from his will – the message of the Gospel is one of voluntary yielding to God through His glorious display of love. There is no sinner so lost that God cannot show mercy upon him. There is no people group so void of morality that they cannot hear of what God did in Christ and be converted. There is no color, race, creed, or ethnicity which is walled off from God’s gift of salvation by grace through faith.

It is by God Himself, through Christ Jesus, that this comes about. He is, as it says, “the captain of their salvation.” The word “captain” comes from the Greek *archégos*. It is not a captain in the modern sense, meaning a junior officer. Rather, it signifies the author of something. He is the first in a long procession of others who will follow. Jesus Christ is the founder and the leader of the salvation which leads man back to God, the reason for their very existence. It is this Jesus who it says, was “made perfect through sufferings.”

The idea of being “made perfect” is tied directly to the words of verse 7 where it says, “You have crowned him with glory and honor.” This making perfect does not carry the idea of being made “better,” as if there was a lack in Christ. Rather, it speaks of bringing to completion, or meeting, the goal. Christ suffered, was crucified, and died with the intent of bringing God’s plan of salvation to fruition. In His passion, man sees the very heart of God, and willingly responds to that glorious offering. The work of Christ makes Him fully and completely suited to bring those many sons to glory. This then explains the constant theme of Paul’s writings – “no works.”

If a person does something to merit God’s favor, then God is not glorified through their salvation. However, if God does all the work necessary, and in such a way that the sinner understands this – full and complete forgiveness through the work of another – then God will receive all of the glory. Again, the reason for man’s existence is to find his end in God. If we feel we have found our end in God through our merit, then we have not found our end in God. The perfecting of Christ through suffering means that in His sufferings He is fully qualified to bring man back to God. There was no lack or deficiency in Him. Rather, He was fully

complete before His suffering, but we were not. He has made a perfected way of salvation through His work.

Life application: All hail the name of Jesus.

Lord God, when it says You have brought many sons to glory, it doesn't mean by advanced selection. Nor does it mean by forced submission. Instead, we have seen the perfecting work of the Author of our salvation – Jesus Christ – and we have seen the deficiency in ourselves. He has filled up what is lacking in us. We come before You as poor beggars, and You have offered us eternal glory in Your presence because of the work of our Lord. All hail the name above all names! We give glory to You, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For both He who sanctifies and those who *are* being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Hebrews 2:11

The word “For” is given to build upon what was just said concerning Christ’s work of “bringing many sons to glory” which was “through sufferings.” The author will continue to speak of the trials of the Savior in connection with our own trials and suffering later in this chapter. He next says, “both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified.” The suffering (For) is being tied in with sanctification. The idea here is that “sanctification” is being used in the sense of a restored relationship with God. In both uses of the word of this verse, it is in the present tense and active voice. Thus, it more rightly says, “...both He who is sanctifying and those who *are* being sanctified.” It is an ongoing process of what is occurring in those being brought to glory. It is the path to the glory which lies yet ahead.

The author then says, “are all of one.” The words can be taken in a couple of ways. It is possibly speaking of God, who is One. Or, it may be speaking of both Christ, the Sanctifier, and those who are being sanctified. They are all one despite the

highly exalted and glorious position which Christ fills. The latter is probably the correct interpretation based on the second clause, "...for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

"He" refers to Jesus. Despite His infinite glory, He is bringing His fallen creatures on the path to glory. It is a certain fact that it will occur, despite the fact that it is presently on-going. But because we are heading there, it is as if we are there. The end is assured. Thus we are "all of one." And because of this, Christ Jesus is "not ashamed to call" us brethren.

What the author is telling us in these words, is that because of Christ's taking on humanity and suffering for us, there is now such a strong bond and union between us that we are united as one. It is a bond of brotherhood which now exists. The verse is another implicit reference to the doctrine of eternal salvation. For Christ to save someone, bringing them into the bond of His sufferings, to then cast them off is contrary to the very idea of unity of oneness and the fellowship of being brethren. The verses ahead will continue to describe the bond which now exists because of those who have, by faith, trusted in the work of Jesus Christ.

Life application: We fall, we fail, and we err in our walk. This is true. However, Jesus is fully capable of maintaining our salvation for us. He is our Mediator and our Advocate. He has set us on the path to glory and the end is assured. Be confident that you are (and will remain) saved, despite yourself.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful promise of glory which is given to those who have trusted in Christ Jesus. We have been set on that promised path, and in Your mind, we are already there in the heavenlies in Him. We have absolute assurance that we have been, and will remain, saved. This is despite ourselves. You don't err. We have surety in Your promises! Thank You for this, O God. Amen.

...saying:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren;

In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” Hebrews 2:12

The words of this verse are a citation from Psalm 22, a messianic psalm which exactly describes Christ’s Passion. The time on the cross was a time where the Lord called out to His Father in anguish. Verse 21 then says, “You have answered Me.” Immediately after that come the words of verse 22 which are cited here.

The author has shown that through Christ’s suffering, He has brought “many sons to glory.” In the completion of His work, Christ (speaking to the Father) says, “I will declare Your name to My brethren.” The obvious intent is that Christ is speaking of those He has redeemed as His “brethren.” The focus of the author is on the fraternal relationship between Christ and those He has redeemed. Christ is the One through whom God has now spoken to us (see Hebrews 1:2). He declares God’s name to the world, and those who receive His word are His brethren, and thus children of God (see John 1:12).

The idea of declaring God’s name is one of making Him known. The name identifies and explains the Being. Therefore, the intent is that God in the Old Testament, partially concealed, is being revealed in a more perfect way in the New. God has progressively revealed Himself in human history, and in the coming of Christ Jesus, the more complete and perfect revelation of Himself to the world is seen. The Son is the declaration, and thus the revealing, of God.

“My brethren,” then, is in the first and in the greater sense, humanity. But, it is, from the standpoint of the Psalm itself, specifically His people within humanity – meaning the Jews. Christ is the incarnate Word of God. In His humanity, He speaks to His brethren – meaning other humans, and at first to His own (see John 1:11). But as noted already, it is even more specifically applied to those who actually receive that word. This is seen in the words, “In the midst of the assembly.”

The word is *ekklésia*. It signifies a called out assembly. Israel is a called out assembly. Christ came to and through Israel. However, as John 1:11 & 1:12 (both referenced above) proclaim –

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”

And so in this, we can infer from the author’s train of thought a “from the general to the specific.”

- 1) Christ is a Human; He came to humanity.
- 2) Christ is a Jew; He came to the Jews – a called out assembly.
- 3) Christ is the Redeemer; He came for those He redeemed – a specific called out assembly. As the author is writing to the Hebrews, he is specifically speaking to those of Israel who have received Christ. However, it is already understood from the writings of Paul that the idea of being a child of God is not limited to Jews, but to anyone – Jew or Gentile – who has received Him. It is in this *ekklésia*, or called out assembly, that it is said of Christ towards God, “I will sing praise to You.”

These words are quite often attributed by scholars to Jesus having sung a hymn with the disciples at the Last Supper. This is incorrect. The words cited from the psalm follow after the Passion, not before. Christ is the praise of God. Whether this means Christ is actually the one who sings praises to God, or that it is those “in Christ” who do (being united to Christ), the singing of God’s praise is what occurs after the suffering and among those who have been redeemed; who are His brethren. It is because of the completed work of Christ that this comes about.

Life application: Hebrews is written to... the Hebrews. The author is speaking of matters which pertain to them. However, the truths apply to any who have been redeemed by the Lord. Hebrews is an instruction manual on Christ's work in fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures, and must be taken in that light. And so first and foremost it is given to the Jews, just as Paul's epistles are first and foremost written to the Gentiles. Both Jew and Gentile are included in their truths, but the audience of address is significant in understanding the full intent of what is said.

Gracious, glorious, and marvelous are You, O God! Help us to never hold back a word or song of praise to You. Whether we are in ease and comfort, or stress and distress, we are still able to praise. And the praise can only elevate our comfort or lower our distress. Either way, it is a win-win scenario when we offer to You the praises that You are due. Praises to You forever and ever, O God. Amen.

And again:

"I will put My trust in Him."

And again:

"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Hebrews 2:13

The two clauses of this verse are probably both taken from Isaiah 8. The first one is similar to words spoken in 2 Samuel 22:3 and Isaiah 12:2, but as they are both cited in Isaiah 8, it is that passage which is probably on the author's mind. He has simply quoted Isaiah 8:17 & 18 –

"And I will wait on the Lord,
Who hides His face from the house of Jacob;
And I will hope in Him.

¹⁸ Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!

We are for signs and wonders in Israel
From the Lord of hosts,
Who dwells in Mount Zion."

As can be seen, the surrounding words are messianic in nature, looking forward to His coming. The author clearly understood this, seeing Jesus as their fulfillment and applying the words to Him and to what is realized in His New Covenant. They are both to be taken as Jesus speaking about God, just as in the previous verse. Jesus has put His trust “in Him” meaning the Lord. As was seen in verse 1:13, this in no way diminishes the deity of Christ, it simply refers to Jesus’ who is both God and man. The citation in verse 1:13 was from Psalm 110 where the LORD (meaning Yehovah) was speaking to Adonai (“my Lord,” also meaning Yehovah). One was referring to God the Father and the other was referring to God the Son.

In both clauses of this verse from Hebrews, the words “And again” are used. Thus both are building on the same concept previously laid out, that of brotherhood. Understanding this, he first says, “I will put My trust in Him.” Jesus has put His trust in God; those who follow Jesus have put their trust in God. In this, the brotherhood is established because all are trusting the same heavenly Father. Christ trusted Him in the completion of His work; we trust in Him through the completion of Christ’s work. And so, the fraternal relationship is strengthened because the object of the trust is the same in both.

One can think of two sons stuck in a pit. The first is brought out directly by the father. In the case of the second, the father says, “I am going to get you out of this,” but the second son is in a deeper part of the pit, and so he uses his first son in the process of getting the second son out. Without the work of the first son, the second would never be retrieved, but both are saved. Both sons have trusted their father, and both have a common bond which unites them more firmly than ever before. This is the idea of the first clause.

The author then continues on with, “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.” The original intent of the words in Isaiah is that Isaiah and his sons had become as signs and wonders to Israel. Isaiah means, “Salvation of the Lord.” He is typical of Christ. His sons are Maher-shalal-hash-baz which means, “Speed the spoil, hastens the prey,” and Shear-jashub which means, “A remnant shall return.” The Lord would judge Israel by hiding His face from them (Isiah 8:17), but a portion of them would be saved. Those whom He calls “brethren” are those who have trusted God’s work in Christ. This is why Isaiah and his sons are used. Their

names were equivalent to what God would do to Israel. Thus, the three of them are as “signs and wonders” to the people.

Jesus is God’s Son. The “brethren” are children in relation to God because He has adopted them in Christ. However, they are also “the children whom God has given Me.” They are 1) sons of God; 2) sons of Christ who is the Lord, and 3) they are uniquely Christ’s brethren as well. This is why Christ is “not ashamed to call them brethren” (verse 2:11).

The key to understanding the entire passage as outlined so far is that Christ is both the Son of God, and that He is God. It is the deity of Christ that is on display here. Thus, He is “greater than the angels.” The author will continue to develop this in the verses ahead.

As a final thought, please continue to consider the context. The book is specifically written to the Hebrews. It is they who are being spoken to. Though the Gentiles are also sons of God through faith in Christ, it is important to continue to remember who is ultimately addressed in this book.

Life application: A cursory reading of these verses is enough to give a person the general idea of son-ship, brotherhood, and etc. However, a detailed study of them is really necessary to see the majesty of what God has done for us through the work of Christ Jesus. Be patient, contemplate carefully, and ponder deeply the words of God. In this, you will always be blessed with a fuller understanding of the intent behind the surface words which may at first seem difficult to grasp.

Heavenly Father, we were in a pit of our own making, and yet You came to get us out of it. Jesus voluntarily came to go into the pit and rescue us from it, all the while He trusted in You to deliver Him so that He could then deliver us. Through Him, we are restored to You as sons, and He has called us His brothers. What an amazing story is revealed in Your word. We thank You, O God, for what You have done for us in, and through, Christ our Lord! Amen.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Hebrews 2:14

The words, "Inasmuch then," take us back to take us back to verses 9 & 10. This becomes clear by the next words, "as the children have partaken of flesh and blood." As already noted, Jesus became incarnate that he "might taste death for everyone." The author builds upon that thought here. He notes that He did this thing, having "partaken of flesh and blood..." The Greek is reversed here. It actually reads "blood and flesh" as it is also found in Ephesians 6:12.

The life is in the blood, and thus without the blood, there would be no movement of the flesh. A war is being waged against man which necessitated Christ to come as a Man just as we are. Blood ran through His body and He walked among us as He waged His battle against the forces of evil. This is evidenced by the words, "He Himself likewise shared in the same." John, right at the beginning of His gospel, stressed this point. In John 1:14, he said, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the *only* begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He begins his first epistle with that same thought in 1 John 1:1-3.

The author continues next by saying that Jesus Christ came and shared in our humanity so "that through death..." The implication here is that Jesus Christ ultimately came to die. The author has already stressed that He "might taste death for everyone" (verse 1:10). He now says that the sharing in humanity looked to his death as the goal. It was not a mistake or something that merely might have taken place if needed, but that His death was the necessary and logical outcome of having come. It had to occur in order to accomplish that which needed to be done. As God cannot die, the incarnation was necessary. But even more, an angel could not be sent to accomplish this either, because angels cannot die either. They are spirit beings. They have a beginning, but no end. Only in the incarnation could what needed to be done actually come about. And this was that "He might destroy him who had the power of death."

The wording is incorrect. It should say something like, “He might make ineffective, him who had the power of death.” The devil is not now destroyed, nor will he ever be. He won’t be removed from the scene until the time of the millennium (Revelation 20:3), and he won’t be cast into the Lake of Fire until after the millennium (Revelation 20:10). Even in the Lake of Fire, he will not be destroyed, but will continue on in eternal punishment. However, his power has been brought to nothing for the redeemed of the Lord. It is the devil who has “the power of death.” In dying, Christ was able to render that power ineffective. As He said at the grave of Lazarus –

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” John 11:25, 26

He was not speaking of physical death so much as spiritual death, which is separation from God. It is spiritual death that man experienced at the fall, and which has been inherited by all humans since then. Once a person believes in the work of Christ, they move from death to life. They can never again “die” meaning be separated from God. Christ’s physical death was necessary for this spiritual (and eternal) life to come about in men.

The author finishes up the verse with the thought that it is “the devil” who holds the power of death. Albert Barnes most eloquently explains the universality of the power of the devil –

“The palace cannot exclude him; and he comes unbidden into the cottage. He finds his way to the dwelling of ice in which the Esquimaux and the Greenlander live; to the tent of the Bedouin Arab, and the wandering Tartar; to the wigwam of the Indian, and to the harem of the Turk; to the splendid mansion of the rich, as well as to the abode of the poor. That reign of death has now extended near 6,000 years, and will travel on to future times - meeting each generation, and consigning the young, the vigorous, the lovely, and the pure, to dust. Shall that gloomy reign continue forever? Is there no way to arrest it? Is there no place where death can be excluded? Yes: heaven – and the object of the Redeemer is to bring us there.”

The devil possessed absolute power over death, and death came to all. Therefore, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should come and die for us. In doing so, He has broken the bonds of death, and He has released us from its terrifying power. This is the love of God, and the power of that love, as is found in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Life application: Who else has died for mankind that he might be redeemed from the power of death? None have done so because all were already consigned to the same fate. But God in Christ was not. Instead, He voluntarily gave up His life to free us from death. How should we respond to this fact? By hiding it away? By remaining timid about “offending?” By being callous towards those who still face the sad end we have been delivered from? By no means! We are to open our mouths and speak. Once physical death has overcome the spiritually dead soul, it will remain that way forever. Let us not ignore that horrifying possibility in our fellow man.

Lord God, Christ came to share in our humanity in order to render the power of the devil ineffective. Apart from Jesus, that evil serpent has full power over the fate of all men. But Christ has overcome! He has prevailed! And through Him, we are born again to new and eternal life. May we never remain silent about the truth of Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, all men will remain eternally separated from You. But in Him, we are united forever. Help us to be bold in our words of restoration and life as we speak out about Jesus. Amen.

...and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Hebrews 2:15

This verse is a part of a whole thought which started in verse 14. Together they say

—

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

As is seen then, the author notes in the immediate context that the purpose of Christ taking on human flesh had two aspects to it, one following after the other. First, it was to make void (note commentary on previous verse) the power of the effective working of the devil. In accomplishing this, it would then “release those.” The word translated as “release” is a rare one, having been seen only once in Luke and once in Acts. This is its third and final use. It gives the sense of delivery or removal. Next, he identifies the previous state of those who have been released. It was those who had a “fear of death.”

What he is conveying is that humanity has always been afraid of death. We may ignore it, we may forcibly push it out of our minds, we may deny it, but the lingering fear of death is always there. And this fear is not only for ourselves, but it is also there for those we love. Further, the fear is there in various degrees, such as that of a long, painful, and lingering death. The reasons for fearing death are many. It means the end of the things we enjoy. It normally includes pain. It means that the body we have cared for and cherished will corrupt, putrefy, and breakdown. It means entering either into oblivion or into the presence of God. Either way, it means something completely different than that which we can now associate with. For these and other reasons, humans have a fear of death throughout “all their lifetime.”

From our earliest days, and throughout our entire lives, we are subject to this fear. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown goes so far as to say of this state that “Such a life can hardly be called life.” Man who is destined for death does not have true life. Our existence is vanity personified. The book of Ecclesiastes deals with this minutely.

The author then explains what this fear of death throughout our lives mean. He says by it we are “subject to bondage.” The Greek reads more literally, “subjects of bondage.” In other words, we are not simply liable to slavery, but rather we are

completely captivated by it. This is the type of bondage we are in, a bondage which is completely captive to death. It guides everything we do in a very real sense. We look where we walk, we watch what we eat, we avoid certain places, and so on. Though it may not be at the forefront of our minds, it is always there in us because we are captive to it. But this is what Christ came to free us from. It is explained by Paul in Romans. First, it is a freedom from death itself; a granting of eternal life. Secondly, it is a freedom from fear of death, because death has no power over us (see 1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

Death is considered an entity. It is not the simple act of dying, but the fear which accompanies it, which is removed. This is how Paul states it in Romans –

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Romans 8:15-17

Life application: Unless the rapture comes and we are immediately translated to glory, we are all going to die physically. However, the death that we will face does not stand in victory over us. Instead, we stand in victory over it. Even in the act of physical death, we triumph. With our very last breath, we can still raise our hands to the Lord and cry out, “Victory!” Christ has prevailed; our physical death is merely a step into the eternal life He has secured for us.

Heavenly Father, life is one of bondage to the fear of death. It is an all-consuming and lifelong type of slavery. But in Christ, the bonds are broken and we are set free. We have victory over the foe, and we have the absolute assurance of life which is full, glorious, and eternal. Thank God for Jesus who has broken through and gone ahead of us, showing us the way back to You! Thank You, O God, for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Hebrews 2:16

“For” is given to build upon what has been stated. The author has been speaking of the bondage and fear of death that men face and how Christ came, partaking in our same nature in order to free us from this bondage. Understanding this, he continues with “...indeed He does not give aid to the angels.”

Angels do not die; they are aeviternal beings. This means they have a beginning but no end. They are also not redeemable. They are either angels which serve in God’s heavenly hosts, or they are fallen and will be cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity (see Matthew 25:41). No aid is given to angels because of this. However, man can be redeemed, and so Christ came in order to “take hold of” him (as the Greek reads) and to lead him by the hand to freedom from bondage. The word used is essentially a metaphor signifying rescue from peril. For the Lord to take hold of someone means exactly this, and this is what Christ came to do.

After this, he then says, “but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham.” As first, it seems curious that he says this, rather than “to the seed of Adam.” However, there are several reasons for using Abraham. The first is obvious, based on who is being addressed in this epistle – the Hebrews. Jesus entered into humanity through the line of the Hebrew people. Abraham was the first noted as a Hebrew in Genesis 14:13. He is also considered the father of their faith. The author is not excluding Gentiles here, but rather is identifying Christ with the people of faith as the psalmist does in Psalm 105:6 –

“O seed of Abraham His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!”

In the Song of Mary in Luke 1:55, the same idea is expressed there. Mary was certainly only thinking of her people, Israel, when she said this. However, a father may have five children, loving them equally, but he may focus on one at a given time and another at a different time.

Secondly, though Paul uses the term “seed of Abraham” as indicating actual genealogy back to Abraham in Romans and 2 Corinthians, he also uses it as a genealogy established by faith in Galatians 3:26-29 –

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Thus, despite certainly talking about a literal genealogy back to Abraham here (as Matthew does in his genealogical record of Matthew 1), the author is not excluding the possibility of those not of the literal genealogy of Abraham from being included. Though it is not the intent of his words now, and it would be out of place to address all who are of the faith of Abraham (meaning Jew and Gentile) as being the seed of Abraham, it is still true that Abraham descended from someone who was not a Hebrew. He was further promised to be the father of many nations (Genesis 17:4). And so despite addressing the Hebrew people specifically, and making a point about helping them, Scripture also shows that the help provided to them implicitly (and even explicitly at times) applies to all who are willing to come to God through faith in Jesus.

Life application: It is important to remember who is being addressed in a particular book, or even a section of a book. Paul addresses the Jews at times in the book of Romans, and then he addresses Gentiles at other times. In Hebrews, the addressee is the Hebrew people, and it is from this perspective that the letter is being written. However, this does not negate inclusion of the Gentiles in what is being said. We need to be careful to ensure that what is said to the main addressee is understood, but we can also determine when Gentiles are included in the address – or at least when they are not excluded from the truth which is presented.

What a marvelous story of love and attention is found in Your word, O God. You have looked upon the people of the world and determined that we are worth saving, if we will just come to You on Your terms. We are to come not by deeds of our doing, but by faith in what You have done. By simple belief, confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that You raised Him from the dead, we have peace with You. How simple, and yet how difficult! Help us to put aside our pride and to trust only in what You have done. Amen.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Hebrews 2:17

The word “Therefore” asks the reader to go back and review what brought about the coming statement. The words certainly cover everything back to verse 2:10 at least. There it spoke of bringing many sons to glory. Immediately after that it said, “For both He who sanctifies and those who *are* being sanctified are all of one.” The thought of Christ sharing in humanity continued right up until verse 16. There, in verse 16, it spoke of giving aid to the seed of Abraham.

Understanding the context, the author says, “in all things.” There is a like for like comparison being made. It is not that the two will be somewhat alike, but that they are alike in all ways. This is confirmed by the next words, “He had to be made like *His* brethren.” If Christ were made like an angel (verse 2:7), He would not be “like man” in all ways. If He were exempt from a body which could suffer (verse 2:10), He would not be “like” us in all ways. If He were not able to be tempted (verse 4:15), He would not be like us in all ways. And so on.

The verse also directly refers to the final thought before this verse which mentioned “the seed of Abraham.” Christ was made like the seed of Abraham in all ways as well. Vincent’s Word Studies goes so far as to say, “Likeness is asserted without qualification. There was a complete and real likeness to humanity, a likeness which was closest just where the traces of the curse of sin were most

apparent – in poverty, temptation, and violent and unmerited death.” This is correct. This closeness, to where the traces of the curse of sin are, was necessary in order “that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.”

The high priest was selected from among the people of Israel. He shared in their family line, he shared in their culture, and he shared in their plight in all ways. He was, therefore, able to empathize with his people in the execution of his duties under the covenant that the Lord made with the people. The same is true with Christ in His ministry. Likewise, it was necessary for Him to be like those He ministered to as well, if He were to initiate a new covenant. The introduction of the role of Christ as High Priest at this point takes the reader back to the very opening words of the epistle. In verse 1:3 it said, “who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

The thought of the purging of sin is that which pertains to priestly duties. The author has spent all of the past two chapters leading the reader to this point. It is a point which will be referred to from this point on as well. If there is to be a new covenant, there must be a High Priest to administer it. But if there was already a covenant in existence, there must be a valid reason why it needed to be set aside. The author’s words are preparing us for understanding these things by first showing that Christ is suitable to the role. After that, he will then address the how’s and why’s of the introduction of the New Covenant.

In being like His brethren in all ways, Christ is able to be the merciful and faithful High Priest that is needed. Without being able to empathize with His people, there would be a lack of mercy needed to properly conduct His duties. Without facing trials similar to His people, He could not faithfully represent them in their own petition for strength, or for mercy and forgiveness. But Christ can because He did.

He first lived the life necessary, and then He became our High Priest “in things *pertaining* to God.” This is referring to the system in which the High Priest conducts His duties. There is a need for One to act between God and the people; a Mediator. This job fell to Aaron and his sons under the Old Covenant. In the establishment of a new covenant, there would likewise be this need. The system of sacrifices necessary to appease God, the conveyance of prayers on behalf of the people, the communication of the will of God, the judgment in accord with the covenant’s laws, and so forth, all needed to be accomplished by a suitable mediator. Christ was set to fill this role in the coming of the New Covenant.

To complete the verse, the author then says, “to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” The Greek word chosen here, and translated as “propitiation,” is only found elsewhere in Luke 18:13 –

“And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’”

How could the High Priest truly Mediate in such a way as to petition God for mercy for such a wretched soul unless He had first been made “like *His* brethren” in all ways? The verb used for “make propitiation for” is akin to the cognate noun which signifies that which is the propitiation – the atoning sacrifice. It is what accomplishes the action which removes the wrath of God, allowing Him to be merciful. That noun is used by John twice – in 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10. In both uses, it is speaking of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus for our sins. In the giving of His life, He is able to make that propitiation which is necessary for God to be merciful. He is the very focal point of God’s mercy, and therefore His ministry is perfectly sufficient to accomplish the obtaining of that mercy for His people.

Life application: How can God demonstrate infinite mercy upon His finite and fallen creatures? He can do it through His perfect Sacrifice, Jesus. In the giving of His Son, the void is bridged, the gap is crossed, and the wound of separation is healed. Christ Jesus is the very focus of God’s mercy to His creatures. We don’t just have a hope in eternal life, in Christ Jesus we have the absolute assurance of

it. The enmity is ended, and reconciliation is realized because propitiation has been made.

Glorious, gracious, and merciful God... Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:18

The word “For” is based on the explanation given in the preceding verse. Christ “had to be made *like* his brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

In being made like His brethren, He endured suffering. As the author states, “in that He Himself has suffered.” It isn’t a matter of logical, but speculative, analogy such as, “Jesus came as a man; men suffer; therefore, Christ must have suffered.” Rather, the gospels bear out that He, in fact, suffered. And His suffering was in both small ways and in a great way. He did not exempt Himself from the trials, pains, and deprivations of life. He got sleepy and went without sleep. He got hungry and had to eat. He mourned and wept. The things common to man were shared in by Christ.

Further, He also endured even that which was beyond what men suffer. He was judged as a sinner when He had no sin. He was punished though there was no iniquity found in Him. And He died a torturous death, not for His own wrongdoing, but the wrongdoing of others.

In all of these ways, He was tempted, because suffering leads to temptation. The stress is on the temptation, not the suffering. In fact, the NAS – in accord with the analysis of Vincent’s Word Studies – phrases the verse as, “For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those

who are tempted.” When He suffered from sleep deprivation, he was tempted to get cranky and sin. When He suffered hunger, He was tempted to get “hangry” and sin. Moreover, He was tempted both passively, and actively. His passive temptations (such as being hungry) could have led to wrongdoing, but He also was actively tempted by the devil as is noted in the gospels. This also could have led to wrongdoing.

In each way that He suffered, He could have fallen into sin through being tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Understanding this, the word “tempt” itself needs to be explained. It signifies “a test,” or “a trial.” Christ was tested through the temptations of suffering, and He remained without sin, having passed the test of perfection demanded by God’s holiness. The author then explains the importance of that for His people (His brethren) by saying, “He is able to aid those who are tempted.”

The idea here is one of empathy. It cannot be said that Christ is unable to empathize with us in our own temptations, afflictions, sufferings, and the like. He shared in our common humanity. He felt the pains we feel and endured the losses we endured. He was belittled by others, and was mocked openly, wrongfully accused throughout His ministry, and so forth. In this, He possesses the knowledge of what it is like to be so tempted, and He can thus give us aid and succor in our own lives as we face similar tests of our resolve and of our faith.

Life application: It is not uncommon to hear people complain that God must have no idea what they are going through. They will also call God unfair for the plight they face. First, God owes us nothing. There is nothing we can accuse God of, nor is there anything we can challenge God over. But even more, He was willing to participate in our humanity in order to understand the very weaknesses we face. Those who reject what the Son has done have rejected the greatest demonstration of God’s tender mercies. He didn’t send Jesus to show how bad we are in comparison to Him. He sent Jesus to reveal how much He cares for us.

Wonderfully loving God! You sent Jesus to participate in humanity and to show us how much You truly care for us. In His trials and tests, He has shown that He truly can empathize with our own times of trial and testing. Thus, He stands as a faithful High Priest who has earned the right to mediate between us. There is nothing we endure that He has not also faced. What a comfort it is to know that You have gone to such great lengths for us. Thank You for our faithful High Priest, Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, Hebrews 3:1

The word “Therefore” is a summary of all of the contents of Chapter 2. The words expressed here have their basis in the various thoughts which were put forth there. And so the author next states, “holy brethren.” The term “brethren,” in this sense, speaks of those who are united by faith in Christ. The only time that the word “holy” is affixed to “brethren,” other than here, is in 1 Thessalonians 5:27, but even that is not included in all manuscripts as it is here. The word “brethren” speaks of the unity of those in Christ as sons. This was seen in verse 2:10 where Christ brought “many sons to glory.” The word “holy” is affixed to it because of the sanctification of Christ seen in verse 2:11.

The term “holy brethren” is then being applied to those who are the called out of the Lord. As Israel was called out in the Old Testament and set apart as holy (e.g. Exodus 19:6), so the church was called out as holy because of Christ. It needs to be remembered that the author here is writing to Hebrews. The Gentiles (as in 1 Thessalonians 5:27) have been called out in Christ, and the Jews have likewise been called out in Him. It is He who has sanctified this body of believers.

The author then says, “partakers of the heavenly calling.” This idea was first stated in verse 2:10 in the term “bringing many sons to glory.” Glory is the heavenly calling that is possessed because of Christ. The “partaking” of that calling is based on Christ’s having “partaken of flesh and blood” as noted in verse 2:14. He first partook of our human nature, so that we could then partake of His heavenly state. The calling is from heaven, but it is based on His earthly work. In His triumphing over the flesh, He has imputed His righteousness and given to us the assured glory of heaven.

Based on this, we are asked to “consider.” The Greek word denotes to fix one’s thinking on a matter and to consider it fully, even to a definite and clear understanding of it. The NIV says, “fix your thoughts on Jesus.” Though the order doesn’t reflect the Greek of the verse, it is a well-stated translation nonetheless. We are to fix our thoughts on Him, mull over what He has done, pay heed to what it means in our lives, and so on.

Combined with the idea of “consider,” the author first states the descriptive title, “the Apostle.” The word signifies, “to send forth.” It focuses back on the position and authority of the sender. In this case, God sent Him. This goes back to verse 2:4 where it says, “God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders.” These were accomplished through Christ by the full authority of God. It then goes to verse 2:9 where it says that Christ Jesus was sent, “that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” Jesus Christ is the grace of God, sent unto men. He was sent with a commission which included taking on our nature, and dying in that state. Thus, He is the Apostle par excellence.

The author next says, “and High Priest.” This refers back to verse 2:17 where it says, based on His incarnation and fulfilled work, that “He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

The idea of being an Apostle signifies the mission that Christ was sent on. He was sent by God to accomplish the work of God. The idea of being a High Priest is one of the position He now fills based on His accomplishment of the mission in establishing a New Covenant. He was not a high priest of the Old Covenant, nor could He be. That will be explained in Chapter 7. Rather, He was sent on His mission under the Old Covenant in order to establish the New Covenant, being now the High Priest of a far superior covenant.

The author’s words, “of our confession,” refer to our acknowledgment of Christ Jesus as Lord, having received Him as such, and embraced Him as the Messiah of the Jews and the Christ of the nations. The same applies to both Jews and Gentiles, but the context continues to be the author writing to a Jewish audience.

The author finishes the thought by stating who the Apostle and High Priest is, “Christ Jesus.” It is to be noted that some manuscripts (and thus some translations) do not include the word “Christ.” In them, it simply says, “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus.” That would be more in line with verse 2:9 which said, “But we see Jesus...” It is Jesus who is the Person, and who did the things referred to, in Chapter 2. The author sums up all of that chapter in this one verse, and his pen then points to that Name above every name, Jesus.

Life application: If you are in a church which refers to the object of the faith as “Yehovah,” “Jehovah,” “Yahweh,” “YHVH,” or whatever name from the Old Testament that applies to the Lord, you have missed the point of what the New Testament is telling you. The Lord of the Old *is* Christ Jesus. They are One. God has determined that the name Yeshua, or Jesus, is the name which we are to speak, pray through, adore, follow, pursue, contemplate, and fix our thoughts on. To do otherwise fails to acknowledge the complete and finished work of what He has done in Messiah (Christ). Get your terminology straight, and set your eyes and heart on Jesus.

Lord God, the Name which is above every name is that of Jesus our Lord. You have slowly and steadily worked out Your plan of redemption in human history, culminating in what You did through Him. Help us to never trivialize this. Instead, may we exalt and glorify that magnificent name, JESUS, all the days of our lives. To Your glory. Amen.

...who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. Hebrews 3:2

The word “who” here is speaking of Jesus who was just referred to in verse 3:1. However, this is a present participle, and so “who was faithful” doesn’t convey the meaning of what the author is saying. It is more appropriately rendered “is faithful,” or “being faithful.” We aren’t asked to merely “consider” Him as Jesus

the Person, but to think of Him in His faithfulness to God and on our behalf. It is of Jesus that we rightly say, “being faithful to Him.” “Him” here is speaking of God.

Jesus was faithful to God from whom He came. In the eternal mind of God, a plan was set forth to accomplish the redemption of man. There is nothing arbitrary or haphazard in this plan. God determined what would come about, and it is He “who appointed Him.” This is now speaking of God appointing Jesus. God arranged that Jesus would be the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, as noted in the previous verse. It was God’s determination that Jesus would come from Him, uniting with humanity (the incarnation). In this, Jesus would perform all that was necessary to sanctify His people, making them acceptable to God once again. After that, He would continue on as the Mediator of this New Covenant. It is an eternal service of God.

Finally, in this verse, the author then brings in a new comparison, that of Moses. He says, “as Moses.” Moses was looked to as the highest and greatest example of a humble, faithful messenger of the Lord. The books of Moses, time and time again, carefully record his faithfulness in accomplishing the tasks set before him. He was chosen as the human deliverer of the people. He was set in the role of their lawgiver. He was faithful to receive the word of God and to pass it on as it was received. And he even performed priestly functions before the appointment of Aaron as the high priest of the covenant. In these things, he “also was faithful in all His house,” meaning Moses was faithful in God’s house. The comparison is made in these words – Moses was faithful; Jesus is faithful.

In this chapter, Moses will be mentioned four times. The comparison here is then as Moses was the messenger (apostle) sent by God on behalf of His people, so Jesus is the Apostle who was likewise sent. Later, the comparison of Aaron (as high priest) to Jesus (as High Priest) will be made, but the author is slowly and methodically showing the supremacy of Christ in all ways. In that of Moses, it is a high challenge as well as a sensitive one. Moses was, and indeed still is, revered as one of the greatest figures in Jewish history.

Abraham was the father of the faith; Moses was the great deliverer, lawgiver (messenger of the covenant), and leader of God's people; David was their great king. The author must carefully not diminish the greatness of such people while at the same time show the supremacy of Jesus in all ways. He shall accomplish this because Jesus was the source of these figures' faith, and He is the anticipated realization of everything they spoke of and hoped for. These men were not looking to be exalted in themselves, but to exalt the Lord through His coming Messiah.

Life application: If you speak to a Jew about the Law of Moses and degrade the person of Moses in the process, you will alienate that person immediately. When speaking of Jesus, it is necessary to show that He was the hope and anticipation of everything spoken by, and about, these men. In properly conveying this, there is a chance he will realize this and call on the One that these great men of faith only pointed to.

Lord God! There are great figures of faith in Scripture such as Abraham, Moses, and David. These men are remembered for their own faithfulness within Your plan, but they and their lives were only markers which pointed to the coming Messiah. What they did, and what they said, all looked in anticipation of Him. And He has come. In the Person of Jesus, all of their hope and all of the typology is realized. Thank You that we possess what they only anticipated. Thank You for Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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

"For" expands on the thought of the previous verse. It said there that Christ Jesus "was faithful to Him who appointed Him." Moses was then immediately introduced by saying that he "also was *faithful* in all His house," meaning "God's house." The logic is that if Moses was faithful in all of God's house, he was still faithful as a servant of God (as will be seen by the term "servant" in verse 3:4). With this understanding, we come to grasp what the author intends with the use

of “For.” “For this One” refers to Christ Jesus. It is He who “has been counted worthy.”

The idea of being counted worthy ties again to His having been faithful to “Him who appointed Him.” Initially, it appears that He is on the same level as Moses. If Moses was faithful to God, and Jesus was faithful to God, then both are counted worthy to the same degree, right? No. The thought continues, “For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.”

How can this be? To this point, nothing has been said of Him that would justify this, and yet the estimation is made nonetheless. Both were appointed by God, both were faithful, and yet Christ Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses. The idea of “glory” here is that He is worthy of more honor and dignity than that of Moses. This could cause consternation with a Jewish audience, because Moses, and the law which came through him, was considered the foundation of Jewish life. At the end of Deuteronomy, this is said of Moses –

“But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, ¹¹ in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, ¹² and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.” Deuteronomy 34:10-12

The man Moses was thus held in the highest esteem. To now speak of Jesus as being worthy of greater glory thus necessitates a sound and reasonable explanation. And so one is next provided beginning with, “inasmuch as He who built the house.” God is the Builder of the House, but here Christ Jesus is said to be the One who “built the house.”

The Greek word used signifies “to prepare” or “form.” This would include everything associated with the materials, arrangement, etc. This is the job of the architect. He lays out the plans, determines how much brick, piping, wood, etc are to be used. He then shows where those things go, even to the minutest detail. The

word used so far has only been found four times in the three synoptic gospels when referring to John the Baptist preparing the way for the coming of the Lord. He was setting up and arranging Israel to be ready for Christ to accomplish His mission. In the case of Christ, it is He who has done all the preparation for the building of the house. It is because he built the house that He “has more honor than the house.”

It seems (but such is not the case) that the author has confusion of thought, equating Christ Jesus with God – God built the house over which Moses presided. But Jesus is the builder of the house. There is no confusion. Rather, it is then an explicit reference to Jesus’ deity. As Vincent’s Word Studies says, “The point of the whole, however, is that Moses was a part of the O.T. system – a servant in the house; while Christ, as one with God who established all things, was the founder and establisher of both the Old and the New Testament economies.”

Moses was a servant in God’s house, but he was a servant to Christ Jesus, and thus Christ Jesus is worthy of more glory, because He is God. The only reason why someone would deny this obvious conclusion is that they would come to the text with a presupposition that this cannot be what the author is saying. However, the next verses will bear out that this is exactly what is being said.

Life application: There are those who hold to the Law of Moses as binding today. However, if one understands that Christ Jesus is the Author of the Old Covenant, and that He has now authored a New Covenant in His blood, thus annulling the first, then it becomes clear that we are no longer under the Old. And such is the case. However, the author of Hebrews had to first demonstrate that Jesus is the Author of both. In doing so, what He has done in no way diminishes the Law of Moses, but rather exalts it in Him and for us. He accomplished for us what we could not do ourselves. Stand firm on the idea that we are not under the Old, but under the New. To reinsert the Law of Moses is to diminish what Christ has done, and it is demeaning to Him.

Lord God, You have freed us from the bondage of the law, and You have given us freedom in a New Covenant. Thank You for our Lord Jesus through Whom You did this wonderful work. How grateful we are that we are freed from condemnation, and we are now set on a path to glory which can never be removed again. When we receive Christ Jesus, we are guaranteed eternal life! Hallelujah for what You have done! Amen.

For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.

Hebrews 3:4

It has been noted by scholars that this verse, if omitted, would not leave any loss in the train of thought, and so it appears perplexing as to why the author would simply restate the same words in the passage. However, this actually isn't the case. The word "built" which is used twice in this verse, is the same word which was also used in the previous verse, and which signifies "to prepare" or "form." It includes everything associated with the materials, arrangement, etc. This is the job of the architect –

"For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who **built** the house has more honor than the house. ⁴ For every house is **built** by someone, but He who **built** all things *is* God."

It is obvious from verse 3 that Jesus was the builder of the house in which Moses served in (meaning the Old Covenant). The author now simply assumes the deity of Jesus which has already been revealed in several ways in the previous two chapters. He is the incarnate LORD (Yehovah) of the Old Testament. Using this as an axiom, he now says, "For every house is built by someone."

Moses did not build his own house. He was a servant in the house which had been built by Yehovah. Now there is a New Covenant (a new house) which has been built. This house, too, has been built by the same Lord, meaning Yehovah, who is

the Son. This is revealed in verse 3:6. With this understanding, the author now says, “but He who built all things is God.”

The author is not making a distinction between God and Jesus, as if Jesus is not God. Rather, he is uniting the two by showing that God, in Christ, is the Builder of all things. The same thought is expressed elsewhere by Paul where he uses the idea that God is in Christ, such as in 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

God and Christ are One; Christ is the means by which God has done these things. Whether it is judging the secrets of men (Romans 2:16); allowing man to die to sin (Romans 6:11); expressing the gift of salvation (Romans 6:23); demonstrating His love (Romans 8:39); reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19); or accomplishing all other acts of His glory, including the building all things, it has been done through Christ. What we now see in this verse then is the confirmation of what was stated in the analysis of the previous verse when citing Vincent’s Word Studies –

“The point of the whole, however, is that Moses was a part of the O.T. system – a servant in the house; while Christ, as one with God who established all things, was the founder and establisher of both the Old and the New Testament economies.”

Without the inclusion of these seemingly unnecessary words, a logical connection to God in Christ may have been missed. However, by including it, the thought is brought to full light, even if it should already have been inferred from the nature of Christ. The idea then fits harmoniously with the thought of “the Word” as Jesus is referred to elsewhere. Jesus is the Word of God. It is through the Word that God created all things according to John 1:3. It is Jesus the Son who created all things according to Colossians 1:16. It is God in Christ, who is the Son, who is the Builder

of all things here. Each term is given to show a unique aspect of Christ – be it Word, Son, or Christ, etc. – but they are all the same, they are all JESUS.

Life application: Do you have a nose? Go to the mirror and look at it. Is it on your face? From a proper interpretation of Scripture, it is as obvious as that nose on your face that Jesus is God. When people like the Jehovah's Witnesses come a'knocking, tell them, "Take a hike, Henry Heretic. I follow the Lord God Almighty; I follow Jesus." Don't allow anyone to misdirect You from the glory of what God has done in Christ – the Word of God; the Son of God.

Heavenly Father, You are glorious in all that You are. If the beauty, splendor, wisdom, and marvel that we see in the creation is so magnificent, how much more glorious are You, from whom these things came? The house is not greater than the builder, nor is creation greater than the Creator. How gloriously splendid You are, O God. And so we praise You now and forever. Dwell in our praises, O God. Amen.

And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, Hebrews 3:5

This verse makes explicit that which was already inferred. Taken together, the previous verse and this one say –

"For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. ⁵ And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*."

The word *kai*, or "and," which begins verse 5 is given to continue developing the thought which has already been put forth, and which started in verse 3:2. The "house" referred to is the Old Covenant. The author is telling us that "Moses indeed was faithful." Moses carefully executed his duties and responsibilities

under the covenant which was given through him. But he is, in fact, only a servant of the house. He did not build it, nor was he the head of it. Throughout the law, it is constantly repeated, "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying..." The Lord built the house; Moses responded to the command of the Lord, executing his assigned duties as instructed.

The faithfulness of Moses is of high note, and he is thus honored for it, but that honor extends only to the execution of his duties and not to the planning of what was to be done by the Lord who prepared all things in advance. And those things that were planned by God, and then faithfully executed by Moses, were "for a testimony."

The meaning of this is that they contained truths which would be revealed. A testimony speaks out about a matter. The Lord organized and prepared all things, and then He spoke to Moses who then recorded those things. This made the will of God known to the people. But which people are being referred to? The question is important to consider because the final words of the verse state that they would be a testimony "of those things which would be spoken *afterward*." Note that the word "afterward" is italicized. It is thus inserted.

There are two views on what this means. One view is that it merely speaks of those things which pertained to the time when the law was given, and for the people of that dispensation. Hence, Moses received instruction, and he passed on to the people those instructions. His faithfulness was as a testimony of those things which would be spoken to him and for the people who would then receive it. As Albert Barnes states, "The sense is, Moses was a mere servant of God to communicate his will to man."

The second view is that Moses' faithfulness was a testimony to things spoken which were coming in a later dispensation. In other words, the Law was pointing forward to the Dispensation of Grace. Vincent's Word Studies states, "The meaning is that Moses, in his entire ministry, was but a testimony to what was to be spoken in the future by another and a greater than he." This view is supported

by the fact that Deuteronomy 18:15, which speaks of a coming Prophet like Moses, was fulfilled in Christ, as is noted in Acts 3:22, 23.

As the participle is in the future sense, the second option is surely on the author's mind. It is true that Moses was faithful as a servant, and his faithfulness was a testimony to the people who then received the word through him. That continued on throughout the dispensation of the law. However, the law itself only pointed to Christ. It pointed to Him explicitly in passages such as Deuteronomy 18:15; it pointed to Him implicitly in countless types and shadows; and it pointed to him by revealing truths which the law failed to resolve, as is explained in minute detail by Paul in Galatians 3.

The law which was received by Moses anticipated something better. Moses was faithful as a servant under the law which was given (built) by the Lord. The New Covenant is that better thing which the law anticipated, and the same Lord (Christ Jesus) is the builder of that New Covenant. In this, the supremacy of Christ over Moses is seen; and in this, the supremacy of the New Covenant over the Old is also seen.

The author of Hebrews is carefully leading his Hebrew audience to an understanding that the law is not an end in and of itself. Instead, it, and its servant Moses, both looked forward to the New Covenant. A new dispensation, built on better promises, would come from the Builder of all things.

Life application: The law pointed to Christ Jesus. In the coming of Christ Jesus, the law is annulled. As this is true, why would anyone want to go back under the law? The end-purpose of the law is to lead man to Jesus. In Him, full access to the very throne of God is realized for the people of the world. Let us never fall back on the law which keeps us from access to that throne of grace!

Glorious God, thank You that we have full access to Your throne of grace through the shed blood of Christ. He is our Mediator, and He never fails in this role. When we come to You through Him, our prayers are heard. We can have every confidence that You will handle them according to your infinite wisdom, and You will respond according to what is best for us. May we hold fast to this truth always. Amen.

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

Hebrews 3:6

The author now contrasts Moses of the previous verse to Christ here. Moses was a servant “in all His house.” This is speaking of Moses serving in God’s house. In contrast to that is Christ who is “as a Son over His own house.” The translation is not good. The word “own” should not be supplied. The Greek reads, “over the house of Him.” The word “Him” is speaking of God. The rendering should be, “but Christ as a Son over His house.” “His” is speaking of God. And so, speaking of God’s house, we can see the contrast –

Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant

...but Christ as a Son over His house

As has already been stated, this in no way diminishes the deity of Christ. He is fully God and fully Man. However, Christ the Man is what is being highlighted here. The Son of God is over the house of God. And what is that house? The author continues with the answer by saying, “whose house we are.” The author speaks in the plural, including himself and all others who are the house. The true house of God consists of the people of God. It is our fixed condition. This is referred to by both Paul and Peter elsewhere –

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

“Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, ⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:4, 5

As you can see, the term “we” is being applied to the house of God cumulatively. An individual is not the house of God, he is a “member” in it, a living stone. And so, after noting that the people of God are, in fact, the house of God, the author then says that this is so “if we hold fast.” Again, he speaks in the plural. It is speaking of the people of the house. This is a theme which the author uses in Hebrews in order to keep the audience strong in the faith that they profess.

He then continues with, “the confidence.” The word “confidence” is a compound word formed from *pas*, or “all,” and *rhésis*, or “speech.” Thus, it is “a proverb or statement quoted with resolve” (HELPS Word Studies). It then is a witness to something that deserves to be taken seriously. After this he adds in, “and the rejoicing.” The Greek word speaks of a boasting which focuses on the object of the boasting. If it is in the Lord, it is positive. If it is in self, it is negative.

The author then says, “of the hope.” The hope is the rest of God (verse 3:11) as the house of God. One cannot hope for what one does not anticipate. The hope of the house, meaning the people of God, is a belief that the promises of God for His house will be realized. Thus, the confidence and rejoicing are in this rest that has been granted to the people of God, and which has come through the work of Christ. This hope is what we (plural) are to possess “to the end.” We are not to allow our confidence to waiver, nor are we to allow our rejoicing to falter. They are

the evidences of the salvation of the people of the house, and they are what mark each as a member of the house of God, over which is the Son.

The word “end” here is *telos*. This is not speaking of the end of life, as if in a termination. It is “the point into which the whole life of faith finally gathers itself up” (Vincent’s Word Studies). Thus, this is speaking not of an individual faith which must be maintained, but the collective hope being expressed by the audience. One cannot hold fast to something when they are dead; only the collective can. The author’s examples of this which lie ahead show that this is speaking of a whole group, not merely individuals striving for salvation.

This entire clause, “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end,” is wrongly assumed to indicate one can lose his salvation, as if simply losing our confidence and rejoicing in the work of the Lord is sufficient to condemn us. Actually, the opposite is the case. It is saying that those (plural as indicated) who do have true faith, which is grounded in boasting and confidence, will keep that to the end, showing that they are God’s house (as it says, “whose house we are”). If it were not so, God would have no house, nor could He have one until the very end.

The words are similar to what Paul says in Colossians 1:23 where he says, “if indeed.” The idea is, “If, as I presume.” There is a needful warning for the people of God, but the author does not anticipate failure. Rather, he refuses such a notion.

To think of what is going on, we can look to Israel in their relationship with the Lord. The Lord has promised to maintain Israel forever as a people. However, Israel as a people has often lost its confidence and rejoicing in the Lord. Despite this, they are still the Lord’s, and He has faithfully preserved them. The same is true with each individual in Christ. The Lord will never reject Israel collectively, and He will never reject those individuals who have faith in Christ. He is asking that his audience maintain their confidence as a whole. Christ is over the house (of who we collectively are), and we are to retain the confidence and rejoicing in

that unto the end. In the case of the immediate context, the author is writing to the Hebrew believers.

Although this is getting a bit ahead, to show that this is not speaking of a loss of salvation, the coming verses will speak of disobedience and rebellion which lead to not entering God's rest (verse 3:18). However, verse 4:3 says, "For we who have believed do enter that rest." Therefore, those who have believed have entered into God's promise. The words here, and to come, are speaking of those who have not believed. This will be explained again as the verses continue.

Life application: If we accept the words of salvation as an axiom – that we are saved by grace through faith, and that we are sealed as a guarantee – then we should be confident in that and rejoice in that, together with all the people of God's house. All who have accepted Christ are individuals who then collectively make up the house of God. The house exists, and so we are to be confident in that. Our individual failure to maintain this confidence will not negate the fact that the house exists.

Lord God, thank You for the assurance of salvation You have granted to those who have been saved by You through the work of Christ. And thank You that this salvation is guaranteed from that moment on. You have given us a deposit until the time of our redemption, the Holy Spirit. No fear here! Knowing that we are sealed, we can be confident in the hope we profess. What Your word says is truth. Thank You for this wonderful assurance. Amen.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you will hear His voice, Hebrews 3:7

The word "Therefore" is asking us to consider what has been put forth so far. Christ has been presented as greater than Moses who was faithful in the house of God as a servant within the house, meaning those of the Old Covenant. Christ is

over the house as a Son, meaning those of the New Covenant. The implication is that the covenant Jesus has established is superior to the covenant given at Sinai, because Christ, the Lord, gave both covenants, and the second is administered by Him personally. The author is addressing the Hebrews who might be considering a return to Moses, rather than accepting the provision of the New Covenant, but that would be a step down and back to a lesser. It would be a rejection of the greater covenant brought forth by God in Christ.

Because of these things, the author then adds in several verses which are considered parenthetical. The word “Therefore” is actually tied to the word “Beware” which is given in verse 3:12 – “Therefore ... Beware.” With this understanding, the author begins his parenthetical thought with, “as the Holy Spirit says.” He will next cite Scripture, meaning that the words are inspired by the Holy Spirit. What he cites comes from Psalm 95. This quote here is the last line of Psalm 95:7 –

“For He *is* our God,
And we *are* the people of His pasture,
And the sheep of His hand.
Today, if you will hear His voice:”

The English translation generally gives an incorrect sense of what is being said in the Greek. “Today” signifies the present. This word will be presented several times in the verses and chapters ahead. When it is, it is normally translated with a capital T, even when it is cited apart from the verse. The capitalization is a highlight on the thought of Today as being whatever moment is being referred to.

The psalm is speaking of the rejection of the Lord in the wilderness wanderings, even before entering Canaan. It is written by David (see Hebrews 4:7) many generations later – Today. The author of Hebrews is quoting the Psalm at the time of Christ – Today. The epistle is directed to the Jews of the end times (after the epistles of Paul) – Today. One must understand the importance of Today in Hebrews to grasp what is being said to the Jewish audience, understanding that it is especially addressed to them.

The author then completes the verse with, “if you will hear His voice.” The words make one think of “If you are willing to hear His voice.” This is not the intent. Rather, it is an imperative – “Oh! That you would hear His voice today.” This can be taken in one of two ways, either, “obey His voice,” or “pay attention to His voice in what will continue to be said in the words of the Psalm.” Either way, it is asking for the reader to be mindful of the word of the Lord. Albert Barnes notes what this actually signifies in a full sense –

“His voice – The voice of God is speaking to us:

(1) in his written word;

(2) in the preached gospel;

(3) in our own consciences;

(4) in the events of his Providence;

(5) in the admonitions of our relatives and friends. Whatever conveys to us the truth of God, or is adapted to impress that on us, may be regarded as ‘his voice’ speaking to us. He thus speaks to us “every day’ in some of these ways; and every day, therefore, he may entreat us not to harden our hearts.”

Life application: Today is the day. Paul says that Today is the day of salvation. This is true any day it is Today for the one who does not yet know the Lord. Today is also the day for the believer to present the good news to the unbeliever. Today is all we have. Yesterday cannot be reclaimed, and Tomorrow is a mere hope which may never come. Today we are to be about the Lord’s business before Today is no more and our chance has passed for conducting the work of Today.

Lord God, Your word speaks of Today as being the day. We have no chance of returning to Yesterday to correct deficiencies, to right our wrongs, or to make up for what was left undone. We also have nothing in Tomorrow, except a hope which may never come to pass. Today is what You have given to us to do what is proper and honoring of You. And so help us to use Today wisely, knowing that this day which we possess is destined to end. May we use Today to Your glory. Amen.

**Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness, Hebrews 3:8**

Here now is cited the next lines of Psalm 95:8 which read –

“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,
As in the day of trial in the wilderness,”

The Hebrew words are *meribah* (rebellion) and *massah* (trial), and they speak of the times when the people rebelled against the Lord (Exodus 17:7 & Numbers 20:13) and when they tempted the Lord (Exodus 17:7). The words of this verse in Hebrews are taken from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and they include an article before the word “trial.” Thus it more appropriately says, “In the day of the trial.”

In other words, the verse is speaking of the time of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness, from the Exodus from Egypt, at the beginning (Exodus 17), all the way through until the end when they were ready to enter Canaan (Numbers 20). They had rebelled, and they had tested the Lord. By citing it this way, it showed that they were disobedient through and through. Their hearts were hard, their necks were stiff, and they remained stubborn.

The author here in Hebrews now cites this in his parenthetical words (remember that verse 3:7 said “Therefore,” and verse 3:12 will say, “Beware”). Citing the psalm is a warning. “Do not harden your hearts,” asks them to not ignore the divine call of God in Christ. God called Israel in the wilderness and gave them the covenant. Christ fulfilled the law and instituted the New Covenant. They are being implored to recognize this and not turn from it “as in the rebellion.” The word here signifies “to make bitter.” The people stirred up bitterness and irritated the Lord through their lack of faith.

The words then continue with, “As in the day of [the] trial.” The word “day” signifies the entire time frame of the wilderness wanderings, not just a single day. It was a time of trial. The Lord tested the people’s faithfulness, and the people tested the Lord through their unfaithfulness. The idea of testing the Lord is not one of testing Him to do evil (as is noted as impossible in James 1:13), but that His patience towards their actions was tested. In those who demonstrate a lack of faith in Him, the response is wrath.

All of this was “in the wilderness.” The people tested and provoked the Lord continuously. They did it concerning the lack of food, and He gave them manna. They did it at the waters of Massah, and He gave them fresh water. They did it at the incident of the golden calf, and the covenant was reestablished. They did it at Taberah when they wanted meat, and He gave them quail. They did it in Korah’s rebellion, and on the next day after punishing many, He spared them. They did it in the account of the spies who disheartened the people. They did it after that when they determined to go up to Canaan without the Lord’s approval. They did it again at Kadesh when they again lacked water. Even Moses disobeyed through unbelief and struck the rock when he was told to only speak to it.

Again and again, the people provoked the Lord and tested Him. The author cites this because it shows an on-going, even continuous, streak of faithlessness in the provision of the Lord. If the people were judged because of this, how much more should they be judged for rejecting the greater promises found in Christ Jesus!

Life application: The Lord has provided the redemption. He now expects us to demonstrate faith that this is the case. How can we properly live in His rest, when we fail to recognize that we have already been granted it through faith in Christ? In the end, the only ones who actually suffer are us. Let us stand confidently in the faith we have professed in Christ, and let us not test the Lord in our times of affliction.

Heavenly Father, it is not an easy thing to place our faith solely in You, but this is what we are asked to do. Israel was led into the wilderness, and they were wholly dependent on You. In that day, they provoked You and they tried Your patience in their lack of faith. We have been redeemed, and yet we still act in the same manner. Why should we lack faith or be fearful when the outcome is assured? We have all we need in Christ to sustain us for eternity. Is today not a part of that as well? Help us, Lord, in our lack of faith. Amen.

Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

And saw My works forty years. Hebrews 3:9

The words here correspond to Psalm 95:9, 10. As you will see, the “forty years” is connected to the following clause in the translation from the Hebrew –

“When your fathers tested Me;

They tried Me, though they saw My work.

¹⁰ For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation,”

It is a close citation of the Hebrew, but it much more closely matches the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The words, “Where your fathers tested me,” speak of “the wilderness” mentioned in verse 3:8. Mentioning the fathers is a way of tying the Jewish audience of Hebrews directly in with those who were disobedient. In essence, he is saying, “The very same people that you descended from are those who tested the Lord.” They were under the covenant that the Lord

had made with them, and yet they pushed Him to the limits in regard to that same covenant. Going on, he then says, “tried me.”

The sense here is setting about to make an experiment of how much the Lord would endure. He set the parameters for faithful obedience, and they would step over those boundaries to see what they could get away with. The Sabbath law was given, and an example of Sabbath-breaking is recorded (Numbers 15). The regulations for the priesthood were given, and two of Aaron’s sons decided to go beyond those guidelines (Leviticus 10). The line of the priesthood was determined, and yet certain Levites challenged that decision (Numbers 16). On and on it went with Israel, both testing and trying the Lord. The idea is that Israel set about to push the Lord’s buttons, wondering what kind of a reaction they could get out of Him each time.

Tied into this, the verse next says, “And saw My works.” This is certainly speaking in a two-pronged way. First, they saw His works on behalf of the people. He brought the great plagues upon Egypt. He brought them out through the Red Sea. He guided them with a pillar of cloud and fire. Again and again, His works were on display so that nobody could deny that He had done those things. And yet, they rebelled against Him; and they moaned, complained, and rejected Him. When they did, He would show them His works in another way. He would bring judgment upon them for their disobedience. Time and again such works were recorded, demonstrating that He was displeased with their irreverent and unholy attitude. And this continued “forty years.”

This is the time recorded from the Exodus until their entrance into Canaan. The exact time-frame is recorded first in Numbers as a surety that it would come about, and then in Joshua showing that it had occurred –

“According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. ³⁵ I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.” Numbers 14:34, 35

“For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *who were* men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord—to whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’” Joshua 5:6

As a parallel to this, the Lord Jesus gave Israel another chance to turn from their ways and to come to Him. From the time that the gospel was preached, until the overthrow of Jerusalem, it was again a forty-year period. Jesus told them that this would be as the sign of Jonah to them. This is recorded in Luke –

“And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, ‘This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.’” Luke 11:29

The sign of Jonah was his preaching to the people at Nineveh (see Luke 11:32), which said that destruction would come in forty days. Like Israel in the wilderness, a day for a year was applied to Jesus’ words, and forty years later, the temple was destroyed. The people had again rejected the Lord, and they suffered for it.

The author of Hebrews is writing to them during this forty-year period. However, his words speak out to the Jewish audience of today, warning them of what will come upon them for continuing to reject the Lord and pursue their own perverse path.

Life application: The Bible says –

“That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 1:9

When will God’s people wake up and pay heed to the lessons of the past? God doesn’t change. By learning what pleases or displeases Him, from what is recorded, we can make right decisions about how to conduct our own lives. Let us study the word of God, and rightly apply it to our lives.

Heavenly Father, Your word is given to us to show us many things. One of those things is to know what is pleasing to You, and another is to know that which displeases You. By knowing how You have dealt with people in times past, we can know how You will deal with us now. Give us wisdom to not reject this, but to realize it as a certain truth. And then help us to live in accord with what You have revealed. May we be pleasing to You always through knowing and living out what You have revealed. Amen.

**Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, ‘They always go astray in *their* heart,
And they have not known My ways.’** Hebrews 3:10

These words continue with the quote from Psalm 95, specifically verse 10 –

“For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation,
And said, ‘It *is* a people who go astray in their hearts,
And they do not know My ways.’”

In this verse, he begins with, “Therefore.” That is not a part of the psalm, but it is inserted by the author of Hebrews to show the logical outcome of what transpired. That outcome is based on the content of verses 3:8, 9 which speak of the hardening of the hearts of Israel, and of their provoking and trying the Lord. In response to that, the outcome is stated beginning with, “I was angry with that generation.”

The word translated as “angry” is found only here and in verse 3:17 of this chapter. It signifies feeling indignant at something. The Lord had displayed His greatness among Israel, and they had constantly rebelled against Him. Thus, He was truly irked at them. Based on this, the Lord then says, “They always go astray in their heart.”

Several of the wonders performed by the Lord were noted in the review of verse 3:9. That was but a few of them. Further, the cloud and the pillar were always present with the people. As it says at the close of Exodus –

“Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord *was* above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”

Despite the wonders, despite the continuous and visible presence of the Lord, and despite His corrective measures, Israel never stopped going astray in their hearts. It is the theme of their lives, being a contrary and stiff-necked people. The Lord could have eradicated them, He could have sent them back to the bondage of Egypt, or He could have multiplied their punishment of forty years of wandering if he wished. But forty years was sufficient to show that they would not change even if the time was doubled or tripled. They had proven themselves unable to be corrected. And this was because, as the Lord says, “And they have not known My ways.”

To know means both to understand and to acknowledge. The Lord had given His commandments, His statutes, and His ordinances. They were given to instruct and guide the people. And yet, they neither grasped the importance of them, nor did they acknowledge their usefulness in either daily life, or in a proper relationship with the Lord. In the end, the reason for this comes down to a single word, faith. The people failed to trust the Lord and have faith in His decisions. The miracles worked among them were unable to correct the hardened state of their hearts, and the Lord thus made a determination concerning them. That is the subject of

the next verse in Hebrews. It is a subject which will then be discussed in great detail by the author as he continues.

Life application: We don't have the miraculous outward displays of the Lord before our eyes as Israel did, but we do possess two things which should stand as sufficient evidence of the Lord's presence among us. The first is His word. It testifies to us of Him, and it should be sufficient to convince us of His presence in an ongoing way in the world today. The second is the ability of the word to change the lives of those who accept it for what it is. So many have been changed by the word, so continuously and for so many centuries, that it confirms the power of the word. We ignore this at our own peril. Be sure to believe the gospel message which contains such transformative power and be sure to apply the precepts of the Bible to your lives each day.

Lord God, there is power in the gospel message to change lives – both of individuals, and of groups of people. It has been preached for 2000 years, and those who have received it have had changed lives. In Your word, and in what it brings about in others, we have all the surety we need to accept it for what it is, by faith. Thank You that we have such a sure and precious word. Amen.

“So I swore in My wrath,

‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Hebrews 3:11

This verse completes the references to Psalm 95, it being an exact quote of verse 11 of that psalm. The people of Israel had tested the Lord, tried His patience, gone astray in their hearts, and had not known the Lord's ways. This continued on throughout the entire duration of their time in the wilderness. Therefore, the Lord's wrath was aroused to the point where it says, “So I swore in my wrath.” He was pushed to the point where He swore, meaning He made an absolute statement which would not be revoked.

The “wrath” which is referred to by the psalmist, and which is then again referred to here in Hebrews, is originally recorded in Numbers 14:26-35. It is a promise that those of the congregation of Israel, who had been brought out of Egypt and saw His marvelous workings on their behalf, would be consumed in the wilderness. They would not be allowed to enter Canaan as He had said to them when He led them from Egypt. This is what the next, and final, clause of the psalm is referring to with the words “They shall not enter My rest.”

The “rest” spoken of here is receiving the inheritance promised to them. It is entering and possessing the land of Canaan. This is seen, for example, in Deuteronomy 12:9 –

“...for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you.”

The reason they would not enter and possess was because of unbelief, as is noted first as a warning to the audience of Hebrews in verse 3:12, and then as explained of the people in the wilderness in verse 3:19. The people lacked faith (belief) in the Lord, and He said that because of this, “They shall not enter My rest.”

This is important to understand. Verse 3:6 is a verse (as noted at that time) which is used to show that we must persevere in our own selves in order to keep our salvation. However, verse 4:3 will negate such a thought when it explains that, “For we who have believed do enter that rest.” It is not something that must be attained; it is something that has been realized – and that through belief.

The author is clearly showing the difference between those who have not believed and those who have. If those who have believed have entered their rest, then it cannot be that when he speaks of a future entering into God’s rest, that it applies to those who have already attained that state.

The word translated as “rest” here is found only once outside of the book of Hebrews, in Acts 7:49 when speaking of the place of the Lord’s rest. Now, it will be used eight times in chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews. Though it is speaking of Canaan as the anticipated rest for the people of Israel, that is only being used as a picture of entering God’s true rest, which is the promise of dwelling securely with the Lord for those who are saved. Tied up in this then is the “rest” of God which is noted in Genesis 2:3 –

“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

That “rest” of God was then cited as the basis for Israel’s observance of a Sabbath day in Exodus 20:8-11 –

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. ¹¹ For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

The Sabbath, then, was given as a sign to Israel of the rest which God was in, and which would someday be granted to the Lord’s people. Entrance into Canaan was a picture of entering that state of rest – God’s eternal Sabbath. These things need to be understood now because they were only pictures, not the reality themselves. It is by faith in Messiah that one actually enters into God’s rest. First, this happens upon belief in the work of the Messiah. In that act, a person is given the guarantee of having been placed positionally into God’s rest (Hebrews 4:3). It is done in God’s mind. At some future point, that guarantee will then actually be realized when we enter into His presence.

How can it be verified that these two rests – the Sabbath and entering Canaan – are only types of heaven? Because Moses did not enter Canaan (God’s rest). If those in the wilderness were actually not saved, Moses would not be saved. However, Moses is clearly accepted by God as evidenced by his presence with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration as is recorded in the gospels. He was not lost, nor was every person in the wilderness lost eternally. Further, those who did enter Canaan would all be considered “saved.” However, Joshua 7 will show that Achan was destroyed soon after entering Canaan because of his faithlessness. Therefore, these things are recorded as examples of spiritual truths only.

Those who were saved, and those who are not, are up to the Lord. What is important to understand is that Israel was collectively being used as types of what occurs in the individual now in relation to Christ – believe and be saved (enter God’s rest), or be condemned through unbelief.

Life application: The study of Hebrews brings out truths which are often very hard to grasp. It is as if they are right at the edge of our thinking, but it seems as if words are actually insufficient to properly explain what is occurring. Such is not the case, but clinging to the commentary of a single individual will inevitably leave a void in our understanding of what is being relayed. Read the word, think on the things it says, check out various commentaries, and then read the word and think on what is being said again. In the end, the one thing that is sure is that we are saved – eternally – by having faith in Jesus Christ.

Lord God, You gave us types and pictures of what You would do in the coming of Messiah all throughout the Old Testament. Each story, each law, and each precept was given to help us understand Him and His work better. In His coming, we can read those things and see the marvel of what You have done through Him. Thank You, O God, for the wonder of life in Christ. By simple faith in His work, everything from those writings then makes sense. We have a sure hope which is grounded in Him! Amen.

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; Hebrews 3:12

The words of this verse now resume the “Therefore” of verse 3:7. Everything since then has been parenthetical – “Therefore...Beware, brethren...” Understanding this, the word “Beware” is given as a warning based on what came before the “Therefore.” In verse 3:6 it says, “whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” Now, as a warning concerning that, he warns his audience to beware, and then says, “brethren.” He is speaking to his Jewish audience who are in the same situation as were the Hebrews of old. It is they who were referred to in the examples provided from Psalm 95.

The principle of unbelief has been exactly established. They saw the great and awesome works of God, and they still turned their heart from him in unbelief. The author knows the past, and he is warning so that the pattern will not be repeated in those he is writing to. However, he then says, “lest there be.” The words are in the indicative mood signifying that it is not merely possible that it could happen, but that there is a reason for thinking it will be so. If the past is a good judge of what will happen again, then it seems such will be the case.

From there he says, “in any of you.” In these words, he is not only appealing to the group, but also individually. There is the group who is to be watchful, but there is the need to look at each person within the group and ensure that they not fall into unbelief. If it appears this is the case, then they are to take the advice that will be provided in the coming verse. For now, the “any of you” is speaking of having “an evil heart of unbelief.”

One can see the words of verse 3:8 being repeated here. There it said, “Do not harden your hearts.” Now that is being repeated to the audience. In essence, he is saying, “lest there be in any of you – as will most likely be the case based on past experience – an evil heart of unbelief.” And why would he assume that? It is because of what followed in verse 3:10, “They always go astray in *their* heart.” Instead of accepting that God is in control, relying on His provision, and remaining

faithful, they departed from him. Their hearts were evil, and they lacked faith that He would, in fact, fulfill His words to them.

In their unbelief, their heart was considered evil because it led them to depart “from the living God.” The living God is now set apart from all other gods which are mere lifeless idols. He is alive, and thus He is aware. As He is aware, He knows of the needs of His people, and He will provide according to the promises He has made to them. Not one of them shall fail. However, if their heart is one of unbelief, as the living God, He is not unaware of their turning. In such a case, He will bring judgment on them, just as He has done in the past.

What needs to now be understood is that “the living God” is being equated to “Christ as a Son over His own house” of verse 3:6. The turning away from the Lord in the Old Covenant is equated to turning away from Christ in the New. To do this is to leave oneself exposed to the same wrath of God that befell those who tested and tried the Lord in the past.

Again, it needs to be considered what is being spoken of concerning God’s rest. Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan because of the sin of unbelief in striking instead of speaking to the rock. And yet we know that Moses is a saved person. The “rest” then was something that was anticipated in Canaan, and it is based on Creation (God rested on the seventh day). This needs to be remembered to understand what is coming in the verses ahead, especially as the author moves into the next chapter.

Life application: Faith is what God looks for in His faithless creatures. He asks His people to believe His promises, and to hold fast to them. We cannot expect anything beyond what He has promised though. For example, God has promised His people heaven where all things will be made new, including no more pain. But this is not heaven. We cannot expect to live in this current life free of pain. Our faith is to look forward to the promises while enduring the present which may be lacking what is only to be realized in the future.

Heavenly Father, help us not to question Your goodness as we face pains, tears, and loss. You have promised a day ahead when such things will be behind us. But that day is not yet here. Until then, we will experience all kinds of temptations and trials. And so help us to look in faith to that more perfect time, and to endure this current life without losing heart in Your sure promises. They will come to pass. Until then, help us to remain strong in our faith. Amen.

...but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:13

The word “but” is given as a contrast to what was just said. The author spoke of any one of the congregation as having an “evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” In order to keep that from occurring, he offers sound and practical advice, which is to “exhort one another daily.” The word “exhort” here means to build up and encourage one another, to give comfort, and to console. The theme is found throughout the writings of Paul, such as in 1 Thessalonians 4:18. There he says to “comfort one another.”

The idea here is to not be like those in the wilderness, and to grumble and complain about how bad their situation was, and how much better it was before He brought them out of Egypt. It was as if God had made a mistake by bringing them out, and He became the object of their blame. If such a root of bitterness were to arise, others were to encourage him in an attempt to quell the bitterness. From there, he says, “while it is called ‘Today.’” A literal rendering of the Greek would be, “as long as the Today is proclaimed.” The word “Today” is prefixed by a definite article, setting it off as a particular moment in time.

The thought brings the reader back to verse 3:7 which said, “Today if you will hear His voice.” There was a day when the voice of God was heard. It was disregarded, and so God, through the Psalmist, said again, “Today if you will hear His voice.” The author of Hebrews, citing this many, many centuries later again says, “Today if you will hear His voice,” and he tells them that daily the Today is proclaimed. But

the word “while” indicates that it is a set time. Someday, the Today will be gone. Today is the day. It is a day when God’s voice can be heard, and it is a day when salvation can be found. It is reflective of Paul’s words of 2 Corinthians 6 –

“We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says:

‘In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.” ²
Corinthians 6:1, 2

Grace is offered Today. It is Today then that the reader is to exhort one another concerning this offering, as the author then says, “lest any of you be hardened.” The word “you” is in the emphatic position which is intended to contrast the reader of Hebrews with the fathers. He is specific that what happened to them should not be repeated. The hardening he refers to is what was stated in verse 3:8 – “Do not harden your hearts.” He will continue to explain this, and then he will restate it again in verse 3:14. It is obvious that he fully expects this possibility to arise, because there has already been the example set in Israel during the wilderness wanderings. The hardening happened, and it was “through the deceitfulness of sin.”

In the Greek, there is an article before “sin.” It is “through the deceitfulness of the sin.” Here, sin is personified. It is as a living force that creeps in and steals away the softened heart, causing it to harden. The specific sin spoken of is that of the previous verse, unbelief. The Hebrew audience is asked to encourage one another, and to do so while it is “Today,” because there may be those who simply refuse to believe. The deceitful enemy is there before them, and they must ensure it is challenged until a state of belief exists. If they believe, they will enter God’s rest (verse 4:3), if they fail to believe, they will not (verse 3:19).

Life application: For the believer in Christ, we are sealed with God’s Holy Spirit as a guarantee of the eternal life which is promised. But that only comes through belief. Apart from belief in the finished work of Christ, there is nothing we can do,

and there is nothing we can give to God, which will bring us to salvation. The author is building his argument for his Jewish audience, preparing them for the decision. Will they choose Christ, or will they go back to temple worship? Though Hebrews was written to the first century Jews, while the temple was still standing, its placement in Scripture shows that the words are directed to the Jews of the end times, when there will be another temple standing. What path will they choose? The author exhorts them to not be caught up in the deceitfulness of the sin of returning to the temple service.

Heavenly Father, You have placed the sun and the moon in their orbits, and You have dug out the pits of the oceans. Birds fly through the expanse of the sky, and monkeys swing in the trees. Everything has a place, and all things work according to Your purposes. Why does such obvious wisdom fail to spark the mind of man? Why do we turn from it and say it was all just time and chance? Lord, help us to understand Your presence, and to acknowledge You for Your acts of glory. Great are You, O God, and greatly are You to be praised. Amen.

For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, Hebrews 3:14

The words here have a similar ring to the words of verse 3:6. Both are in the plural (we), both include the conditional “if,” and both speak of “the end.” Putting them side by side will show this –

3:6 – but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

3:14 – For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

Understanding this, we see that verse 3:14, like verse 3:6, is not a verse which speaks of an individual possessing and keeping his salvation. The words speak of the collective body being 1) Christ's house, and 2) partakers of Christ.

"For we have become" are words directed to the Hebrew audience. "For" is given to explain what was just said about exhorting one another lest there be a hardening of one of the group. "We have become" asserts a fact. There was a point at which they had gone from one state to another. The tense is perfect, the mood is indicative, the voice is active – "We are become." The audience has "become partakers of Christ."

As the author is speaking to the Hebrews, he is making the statement that the Jewish people have become partakers with Christ. The word "partakers" signifies companionship and sharing in something. There is a partnership which has been enjoined through the union. It is the same word given in verse 3:1 which says, "partakers of the heavenly calling."

They are included in all of the rights and benefits which are granted to the Messiah, which He bestows upon them as His people. This is the same as the group who were brought out of Egypt. They had become the people destined for entrance into Canaan. However, because of the failure of the people through unbelief, that right was taken from them and another generation took their place. The same is true with the Hebrew audience here. They had become partakers with Christ. Everything that was promised to them would be granted to them. However, there is a caveat. The author goes on to say, "if we hold the beginning of our confidence."

Indeed, it is a conditional thought – "We have become... if." This is speaking to the whole, just as it did of those who were in the wilderness. If there was not a collective positive response, there would not be a granting of the benefit. The Cambridge commentary notes that the word "beginning" here "does not here imply anything inchoate or imperfect, but is merely in contrast with 'end.'" The Pulpit Commentary then explains the thought with, "Go on as you began." The Hebrews had been selected, Messiah had come, they carried the ball from there.

If this confidence continued, they would indeed be and remain “partakers of Christ.”

The Greek word translated as “confidence” here is not the same as in verse 3:6. There, it was a boldness; here, it is an assurance. It is that which gives substance to something, as if in a guarantee. Understanding this, the author finishes up his thought. The Hebrews were to hold fast to their confidence (their assurance) “steadfast to the end.” Like in verse 3:6, the word “end” here is *telos*. This is not speaking of the end of life, as if in a termination. It is “the point into which the whole life of faith finally gathers itself up” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

Thus, this is speaking not of an individual faith which must be maintained, but the collective faith being expressed by the audience. One cannot hold fast to something when he is dead; only the collective can. There is no “individual” reference being made here. Rather, it is the Hebrew people who are being addressed as a community who are being instructed on entering God’s rest. And his focal point for this state is the awesome day known as “Today.” Again, as after 3:6, the author will provide an example of the collective loss of a right when he speaks of the group of people who were denied entry into Canaan, meaning the “rest” which was promised to them.

As before, this is not speaking of individual salvation, but a state which belongs to the whole. The question is, did the Hebrew audience of this epistle hold fast to the confidence in a manner which was “steadfast to the end”? No! Israel as a whole failed to do so, and the church went from Jewish-led, to Gentile-led. They did not, as a group, remain partakers of Christ.

However, as has been noted before, the letter to the Hebrews is placed after the Gentile-led church-age epistles. It is a clue tied to the dispensational model. Israel was set aside, the Gentiles assumed control, but Israel will again be the focus of God’s attention. Because of this, there is yet hope for them! After the removal of the church, the attention will again be directed towards Israel. At that point, the words here will also again apply to them. If they meet the conditional “if” of these verses, they will enter their rest, meaning the millennium. The book is written,

and it shows that they will, in fact, do so. Until then, there is individual salvation, but Israel as a whole is not yet again included in what is stated here concerning Today.

Life application: Though the doctrinal truths of the book of Hebrews apply to whoever is reading it, there is an intended audience to whom the author is specifically speaking – the Hebrew people. Ripping them out of the context, and then shoving the Gentile-led church into these verses, does a disservice to what is being said. It also leads to misdirected theology and people who believe they can lose their salvation. This is not the intent of what is being alluded to here.

Lord God, help us to keep our interpretation of biblical passages in their intended context. In doing so, we will be sound in our theology, able to answer questions properly, and we will certainly avoid perceived contradictions which otherwise arise. Above all, help us to not make the error that the church has replaced Israel. If we can get this one precept right, everything else rightly and logically finds its place. Help us to remember this! Amen.

...while it is said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,

Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” Hebrews 3:15

It can be seen from these words that verse 14 is actually a parenthetical and explanatory thought. Taken together and placing parenthesis around it will show this –

“...but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,) ¹⁵ while it is said:

‘Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’”

The author again cites Psalm 95, and his focus is once again on “Today.” The call is made, and it is one which requires a response. Through the psalmist, the Lord is looking back to the events of the past and showing what the results of the hardening of the heart through unbelief will be. He then sets a new day, based on those words, calling it Today. On that day, whatever day it is, and even unto the consummation of the event, the onus is on those appealed to, meaning the Hebrews, to not harden their hearts.

The Lord spoke to Israel and they rebelled, tempting and testing Him. Christ now speaks again Today. The gospel has been proclaimed, and it must be responded to in order for Israel to enter their rest. Again, this is not to be applied individually. The words “you” and “your” are plural. It is true that salvation is something that occurs to individuals, and each who is saved is assured God’s rest, but that is not what is being spoken of here. Rather, it is speaking not of an individual rest, but of corporate rest for Israel.

This is certain because of verse 4:3 which speaks of those who have believed as entering into their rest. Each individual is a part of the whole. Out of all of the people who were 20 and above who came out of Egypt, who was it that entered Canaan? Only Joshua and Caleb. But even those who were younger, and who went in with them, did not enter God’s rest. This will be explained in Chapter 4 as well.

Life application: Chapter 4 will speak of the seventh day after creation, the day of God’s rest. This is the day which is anticipated for God’s people, a time of rest from their labors. It is a time where the ideal of Eden is realized. That ideal is man living in harmony with the Lord. For those who are looking forward to that, there is one way for it to come about, which is by faith. The unbeliever will have no part of God’s rest. What happened to Israel in the wilderness was given as a warning to people now. Believe God, and enter His rest. As God’s provision is in Christ, then we are to believe in Christ. In that belief, we enter God’s rest. When Israel believes in this provision, they will enter into the millennium, the seventh day of rest.

Lord God, Your word says that at some point, Christ will return and set up a thousand-year kingdom on earth; but before that day comes, there will be times of immense disaster and cataclysmic destruction on earth. This self-inflicted wound will come because we – as a species – simply fail to believe. For those who have trusted Christ, the promises of salvation are assured. For those who have not, bad times lie ahead. Help us to get this word out so that many may believe and be saved. Amen.

For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Hebrews 3:16

The author now asks a question based on the words of the psalm that he just cited. Those words implored his Hebrew audience, that if they hear the voice of the Lord, to not harden their hearts as they did in the rebellion, meaning the time in the wilderness. It is based on the idea of it being Today. Obviously, he is telling them that Today is the Day. The voice of the Lord is calling. If, in fact, they hear, they need to respond differently than those who the psalm speaks of.

Now he asks “For who, having heard, rebelled?” It is an obvious question that requires an answer from the audience – both individually and collectively. Why is this so? Because he then answers the question for them, saying, “Indeed, *was it* not all.” He speaks of the entire congregation as a whole, not merely as individuals. It is already known that Joshua and Caleb did not harden their hearts, and they both entered Canaan. Further, Moses appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, clearly showing that he is a saved person. Thus, this cannot be speaking of salvation, but of entering God’s rest as a group of people.

With this understanding, we can see the error of the KJV which makes this verse a statement rather than a question, by translating this passage as, “For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.” It would be utter nonsense to say, “For some,” when speaking of over six hundred thousand men (plus their families) when only two adults entered into Canaan.

Further, it is shown, quite clearly, that Joshua and Caleb did not enter the promised rest because the passage is speaking of the collective whole (see verse 4:8), not individuals. Rather than a statement, the Greek forms a question – “For who, having heard, rebelled?” This is confirmed then by the word “all” in the next clause.

The entire congregation (all) are “who came out of Egypt.” The author is clearly speaking of the collective whole that was led by Moses. Again, as stated in previous verses, the entire passage is taking the thought of the Hebrew people rebelling against the Lord, and thus not entering into His rest. Any individual that believes in Christ will enter that rest (verse 4:3), but when the collective rebels, the rest is denied to it. This is why the psalmist again sets another day, calling it Today. Israel has a Day in which they must believe as a whole before they can, as a whole, enter God’s rest. Jesus said as much in Matthew 23 –

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Matthew 23:37-39

After Jesus completed His work, were there Jews who believed? Obviously so. Acts testifies to this, and the author is one of them. Who is Jesus referring to then? He is referring to the collective whole as represented by their leaders who He calls “Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is the seat of power. The leaders in Jerusalem represent the whole, just as Moses represented the whole in the wilderness.

Life application: These verses are completely misunderstood because 1) the audience is not properly identified. It is the Hebrew people who are being spoken to. And, 2) the audience is taken as individuals, when in fact it is speaking to the whole about a matter which affects the whole. God has promised rest to His people (of whom the Gentiles are included). However, that rest for Israel is yet ahead for them as a people. Individuals enter God’s rest through belief, but the

nation of Israel also enters into that rest as a whole through belief. It is the latter which is being referred to now.

Heavenly Father, Your word tells us that for those who trust in Christ, a state of rest is entered into. The work of God is to believe in the One You have sent, Jesus. He is our rest, and He has accomplished the work which grants us that state. All You ask us to do is to believe. What a gift! May many come to understand that the work is complete and that the rest is assured, all because of faith in Jesus. Thank You for what You have done through Him! Amen.

Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? Hebrews 3:17

The questioning of verse 16 continues now. The answer to each question is expected to be the same. He had asked who it was that rebelled? He then asked if it wasn't the same group who came out of Egypt as led by Moses. Indeed, it was so. Israel had been brought out, and they had rebelled. Now he asks, "Now with whom was He angry forty years?" The answer is the same, "Israel." It was their own forefathers who had rebelled, and it was they with whom the Lord was angry for forty years. That is recorded in Numbers 14:26-35.

The author next asks, "Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?" Again, it was so. Israel had sinned through unbelief. That is explicitly stated in Numbers 14:11 –

"Then the Lord said to Moses: 'How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?'"

In that verse, the Lord ties their unbelief in with rejecting Him. Because of this, it says that their corpses fell in the wilderness. The word translated as “corpses” is found only here in the Bible. It literally means “limbs.” It is as if they rotted away as they traveled, falling apart limb by limb. It is the description used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and which the author continuously refers to for his citations. The idea here is that the corporate body, known as Israel, fell one after another until they were all dead. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, all of those counted in the census perished before entering Canaan.

The author is using this example, which is then referred to in the psalms, to ensure that Israel understood that there was collective guilt in the past, and the same was sure to result again if they failed to believe the signs performed among them. This occurred in Israel’s failure to believe the signs of the Messiah. John testifies to this fact –

“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

‘Lord, who has believed our report?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’

³⁹Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

⁴⁰‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,
Lest they should see with *their* eyes,
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.’

⁴¹These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.” John 12:37-41

History had repeated itself, and Israel was about to fail to enter into their rest once again. The kingdom age would not come for Israel. But God has promised them this rest, and it will come about. A time is yet ahead in which it will be realized. Until then, their entry is on an individual basis, through faith in Christ. Someday, however, the collective body will believe, and they will enter the rest promised to them.

Life application: The Lord has spoken, and He expects us to believe His word. When we fail to believe, it is a rejection of Him. His word is intricately tied up in who He is. He is not a man that He should lie. When He speaks, it is a reflection of His character. Let us never be found wanting in our belief in His word.

Lord God, Your word is given, and we are expected to receive it as such. We are shown that a lack of belief in Your word is considered a rejection of You. Your word testifies to the coming of Christ Jesus, and thus a failure to believe in that is to reject You. Your word then explains the work of Christ and how it relates to our daily walk. To fail to walk according to what it says is again a rejection of You. Help us to get this straight, Lord. What Your word says reflects who You are. May we hold fast to what You speak, staying true to You always. Amen.

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? Hebrews 3:18

The rapid-fire questions concerning Israel and their disobedience continue in this verse. The author now asks of them, “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest?” Israel was instructed that they were to go up to Canaan and subdue it, taking it as their possession. Rather than accept this course of action, they believed the bad report of the spies who were sent to determine the status of the land. In their refusal to trust the Lord by accepting that He would go before them and ensure their success, they turned their hearts back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4). Because of this, the Lord vowed –

“Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.” Exodus 14:30

The idea of entering God’s rest was to be that of going into Canaan and subduing it. As God’s people, they would dwell in His presence and be free from external worries. It would be typical of heaven, a place of rest in which a state of rest

exists. However, the Lord's words went beyond allowing them to enter the land. Instead, those who were twenty and above would all die before even one of them, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, could put one foot into the land. And this was because, as the author says, they "did not obey."

The Lord had set them on the path to Canaan, and they refused that path. Their disobedience was a complete lack of faith in the Lord's promises. What is apparent, from the words of the psalmist, is that not only did the Lord promise that they would not enter His rest, but that rest which was anticipated would be put on hold. The next generation of Israelites entered Canaan, but David shows that the rest which was hoped for was still not realized at his time. The words, "Today, if you will hear His voice," shows that God's rest was still anticipated, even at David's time. This will be explained in Chapter 4.

Life application: Whose voice is it that gives rest? It is obvious that it is the Lord, meaning Yehovah. That is based on the promise of rest being granted to the people of God, even in the Law of Moses. However, David, speaking of the same Lord, will show that His rest had not been realized for Israel. The author of Hebrews says that the rest which was promised is found in Jesus. As this is so, then it must be that Jesus is the incarnation of the Lord, Yehovah. It is hearing and believing His voice that allows entrance into God's promised rest. Trust in Jesus, call on Him, and enter into the rest of God which has been anticipated since the beginning.

Heavenly Father, it is so very wonderful to know that there is a place of rest set aside for Your people. We look forward to the day when that will be realized in us. You have said that by faith in Jesus, we have entered Your rest. It is as assured to us as the coming of the new day. And so we shall have no fear now as we await the consummation of the promise we now possess! Thank You for Jesus who makes all things new. Amen.

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:19

The Greek reads, “And we see.” The author is not making a logical conclusion (So) based on the previous questions. Rather, he is issuing a statement of fact (And) that “they could not enter in.” The Hebrew people had been brought out of Egypt, they had seen marvelous signs of the Lord’s power and ability to accomplish all that He spoke, and yet every time the slightest difficulty arose, the people moaned and rebelled, acting as if the ability of the Lord to continue saving them was used up. Access to the land of Canaan was paved, but “they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

They were called out as a group of people, and as a group of people, they rebelled. In their rebellion, the Lord told them that they were barred from entering in. Only two were excepted – Joshua and Caleb. All others died along that same paved path. The Lord was not only capable of bringing them out of Egypt, but He was capable of leading them into Canaan, and of subduing the land before them. The only obstacle to the entire process was their unbelief. Because of their failure to believe, they did not obtain their promised rest.

The chapter ends on this note. It is from here that the author will explain what this means to his audience, and how they can ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated in the time set before them.

Life application: Though written to the Hebrews, the lesson to be learned does not change in regard to anyone else. God has spoken. Will we accept His word as it is written out and show faith in what it says? It is obvious that to not accept His word – be it in salvation, or in what salvation means for us into the future – is to openly demonstrate that He cannot be trusted. Let us never wring our hands in worry that even a single word will fail of His promises. He is God, and His word cannot fail.

It is so wonderful to know that we have a sure word from You, O God. And in that sure word, we can and should completely trust. Are You not God? Do You not know the end from the beginning? And is it not impossible for You to lie? As these are axioms, then why should we allow our hearts to fail when times of difficulty arise? Help us to remain steadfast that Your word is given as an everlasting guarantee. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. Hebrews 4:1

The word “therefore” is given for the reader to contemplate what has been said about the people not entering God’s rest because of unbelief, as stated in Chapter 3. From there, it says, “since a promise remains of entering His rest.” This is the key idea of the argument, and it is that upon which the whole discussion turns. There was the promise of rest, it was not believed by the people, and yet now the promise of rest still remains for God’s people. The truth of the matter still stands; it is yet ahead in God’s redemptive plans.

From there he says, “let us fear.” It is these words that actually begin the verse in the Greek. It bears a special emphasis by saying, “Let us fear, therefore.” The emphasis is on the word “fear,” not the word “us.” In essence, “Lest us (each of us within the group should be in the same mind) *fear*...” The fear he is referring to isn’t a fear of something like wrath or being condemned, but one of uncertainty of an outcome. An example of this thought would be, “O dear, I fear I may have missed the train.” The “rest of God” still stands as a promise and the author says that his readers should fear “lest any of you seem to have come short of it.”

This is not speaking of coming short of it in qualification, such as, “I didn’t make the grade, and thus I am excluded.” Rather, it is speaking of timing and surety of being able to attain what is still available. As Vincent’s Word Studies states it, “Since this promise remains, let us fear to distrust it.” Continuing the example of the train might help.

- 1) The train is set to take the people to their rest. However, because the people in the wilderness did not believe God's promise of entering His rest, the train never took them there.

- 2) The psalmist then said, "Today," when speaking of hearing God's voice – the very thing that will allow them to enter His rest. The promise of rest still awaits. If not, he could not say to them "Today." He is asking them to hear God's voice (believe), and in believing they will enter His rest.

- 3) Now in Hebrews, the author says, "Don't worry, the promise of rest still stands. 'Today' is still the day. And because the promise still stands, let us fear to not believe that it is true." It is God's rest which is still anticipated, and it is attained by belief in God's promise. The train is still at the station, waiting to take the people to God's rest. Let us fear to distrust it. The clock has not run out, the train has not left, and those who believe will be there on time.

It should be noted that the citation by Vincent's Word Studies (above) is completely opposed by the scholars at Cambridge. They say that the words should be translated as "should seem to *have failed in attaining it.*" They then explain that with the words, "The Greek might also mean 'should think that he has come too late for it;' but the writer's object is to stimulate the negligent, not to encourage the despondent."

As you can see, they dismiss the logic of Vincent's Word Studies. However, the context of what has been said, and that of which is coming through verse 4:10, supports what Vincent proposes. Each point of this will be explained in those coming verses as the author continues. It is true that the author will stimulate the audience to not be negligent, but that is because the promise of God's rest is still available. The people are not to be despondent that they have missed the train.

Life application: This is a difficult verse to understand without explanation. Translations of the Bible are given to hopefully provide a snapshot of what is being conveyed, but quite often they simply cannot do so without additional commentary. And in reading commentaries, there may be a multitude of opinions on what that one verse is saying. Therefore, it is unwise to 1) read a single translation of the Bible lest an unsound opinion arises about what is being relayed; and 2) to stick with a single commentator on the Bible who may have derived an unsound opinion about what is being relayed. The more versions we read, and the more commentaries we study, the more we will have sufficient more information to arrive at a sound conclusion as to the original intent of the passage.

Lord God, there is a promise of heaven for those who believe in Christ Jesus. We should not fear that we have missed that train because of our past failures, but we should believe in the promise, come to the cross, and receive our ticket which grants us that access. Let us not be despondent that we have missed out because of what has been, but let us be confident in what can be – all because of Jesus. Thank You that the promise is still available to us. Amen.

For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*. Hebrews 4:2

The word “For” is based upon that which was said in verse 4:1. There, it spoke of the promise of God’s rest still standing, and for those who are being addressed to not feel as if they have failed in their chance to attain it. Understanding this, it says, “indeed the gospel was preached.” This is not a good translation. Although it is the same word translated elsewhere as “gospel,” it is not speaking of the technical term that we consider the preaching of the gospel in this dispensation. Rather, it should say, “good news.” The “good news” of God’s rest was conveyed “to us as well as to them.”

This is speaking of those in the past who were promised God's rest during the time in the wilderness. The same promise which was made to them was also conveyed, as the author now says, "to us." The promise of God's rest is still obtainable, and this is why the previous verse indicated that those now being addressed should not feel as if they have missed their opportunity to enter into it. There still stands the promise of God's rest. Those in the past heard it, "but the word which they heard did not profit them."

The Greek reads, "but the word of the message did not profit them." It is not speaking of the word they heard, but rather the word of God which promised rest. The word of the message was given, but it had to be received and acted upon, and it was not. And why? It is because it was "not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*." Paul says elsewhere that "...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The word of hearing was of no value to them because it was never incorporated into those who heard it.

The Lord promised them rest, and yet they continuously failed to believe Him. Their words and actions demonstrated this. As Vincent's Word Studies says, "They did not make the promise of rest their own. Their history was marked by continual renewals and rejections of the promise." Because this is true, the Lord set a new day, calling it "Today," and offers His rest to the people. The train has not pulled away from the station, and the audience of this epistle has a chance to obtain the rest if they will – unlike their fathers – respond in faith to the word of the message.

Life application: It needs to be remembered who is being addressed. It is a Hebrew audience who is being instructed on the completed work of Jesus Christ. Though it was written in the first century AD while a temple was still standing, its placement in the Bible, after the letters of Paul, show that it is intended to appeal to the hearts of those Jews after the church age. The truths of Hebrews applies to Gentiles, but the main intent of the message is to appeal to the hearts of this group who are seemingly without hope, but who are being encouraged that there is still, in fact, hope.

Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, we can trust in the promises of Your word, because we can see how faithfully you have dealt with Your unfaithful people Israel. The record of their history shows a careless attitude toward You, but You have preserved them nonetheless. You promised this would be the case, and Your promises have remained true. How can we not expect the same when You make sure promises to us? Thank You that we will never be cast away when we come to You in faith. Amen.

**For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:
“So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest,’”
although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.**

Hebrews 4:3

Again as with the previous verse, the word “for” is used to build one thought upon another. Verse 4:1 said, “Therefore.” That called for the reader to consider the lesson to the people about not entering God’s rest because of unbelief, as stated in Chapter 3. He then said, “For,” to say that the same good news of God’s rest which was conveyed in the past was again conveyed to the recipients of the epistle, showing that it was still attainable. However, those in the past did not profit from the message because of unbelief. With this understood, he now again says, “For.”

Each preposition is chosen to build a case concerning God’s rest and how to enter it. Understanding this, he says, “For we who have believed do enter that rest.” The thought looks backward and forward. “Believed” is contrasted to the unbelief of verse 4:2, while “enter that rest” looks forward to what he will say about the unbelievers as this verse continues.

The statement made by the author shows the certainty of the matter. The words “having believed” are from an aorist participle in the Greek. The action of entering the rest is accomplished in the belief. In other words, it points to the moment when the person put his faith in the finished work of Jesus. It was offered, it was accepted, and the rest was entered. There is nothing conditional about the matter. We are not in the process of entering, nor are we on the way to doing so. Rather, as Vincent’s Word studies says, it “is a fact which characterizes us as believers.” God’s rest has been attained through belief.

The importance of this statement cannot be overstated. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Jesus is the place where God’s rest is found. He is the place of rest which the Sabbath only anticipated in type and picture. When the Sabbath was given in Exodus 20, it said

—

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. ¹¹ For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8-11

The Sabbath was given because it was based on the seventh-day rest of God. The author will refer to that seventh day in verse 4:4. The Sabbath was only a type of the Christ to come. He who is the means of access into that seventh-day rest. When a person believes in Christ, they enter into the true Sabbath rest of God. The substance (Christ) replaces the mere shadow (Sabbath observance). This is what Paul refers to in Colossians 2:16, 17 —

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

We are no longer bound to the shadow because we have entered into the substance; we are in God's true rest. To support this, he then returns again to Scripture with the words, "as He has said." In this, he will repeat the verse from Psalm 95:11 which he cited in verse 3:11 –

"So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest,'"

He has logically built his case. There was

- 1) a promise of Israel entering God's rest under the Old Covenant. However, because of unbelief,
- 2) entry into that rest was denied. And yet,
- 3) the psalmist says, "Today," when calling for hearing God's voice. He is renewing the promise of entry into that rest. Now,
- 4) the author speaks of belief in Christ (verse 3:1) as allowing entrance into that same rest, which is
- 5) guaranteed the moment belief in His finished work is exercised.

The entire thought is given, and will continue to be explained, for the same reason as the rest of the book of Hebrews. It is a call to come to Christ through the New Covenant, and to not rely on the Old for one's relationship with God. The author is showing the "better than" of Christ over Moses, and the superiority of the New over the Old. Finishing up the verse, he now says, "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." This will continue to be explained in the coming verse. But for now, the question is, "What works?"

There are works which are said to have been finished “from the foundation of the world.” There is the promise of a future access into God’s rest for the people of God. He cannot merely be speaking of the rest which is spoken of in Genesis 2:2 (which will be cited next in verse 4:4), because that was before the time of Moses. Further, the words used for “rest” in the Hebrew of Genesis 2 and Psalm 95 are not the same. In Genesis 2, it is *shabath* – the state of rest. In Psalm 95, it is *menukhah* – the place of rest.

It also cannot be the rest which came for those who entered Canaan with Joshua (coming in verse 4:8), because the psalmist speaks of another day (Today) after the time of Joshua. And so the rest which is being spoken of is the rest found in Christ who is referred to in 1 Peter 1:17-21 as having been foreordained “before the foundation of the world” to die as a “lamb without blemish and without spot.” And who is then referred to again in Revelation 13:8 as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

The answer to “the works” of this verse is, “The works of Jesus Christ who was ordained from the foundation of the world to die and thus allow God’s people into His promised rest.” Though they occurred in the stream of time, God’s works in Christ were finished from the foundation of the world. When God spoke the created order into existence, it was with the intent of allowing those works of Christ, which were already accomplished in God’s mind, to be performed by Him in the stream of time. This is why Jesus said in John 6:29, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

Our work is to believe in Him as the Christ and as the One to complete the works ordained for Him before the foundation of the world. In this, we enter God’s rest. The Sabbath, which is based on creation (and which was later said to be based on redemption in Deuteronomy 5:12-15), was simply a type of the rest which is found in Christ. The creation itself is merely the vehicle by which Christ could accomplish His work. Hence, the seventh-day rest after creation, which is referred to in Genesis 2:2, is a state of rest which exists in anticipation of what Christ would do by leading us into our place of rest. One thing leads to another, and all things find their fulfillment in Christ.

Life application: In Christ, we have entered God's rest. Be at peace. The works are finished.

Lord God, thank You for the rest we have found in Christ Jesus. By faith in Him, we now possess that which was completed from the foundation of the world – a perfect, absolute, and guaranteed rest. Thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Again as with both verses 4:2 and 4:3, the author begins with, “For.” One thought logically follows the next as he builds a case concerning the availability of God's rest for his audience. The words, “For He has spoken in a certain place,” are the same formula found in verse 2:6. Instead of saying that Moses wrote the thought, he applies the utterance to God who is the inspiration behind the words of Moses. Thus, he says, “in a certain place.” More correctly, it should say, “somewhere.” The indefinite nature is a way of ascribing the writing of the whole body of the Hebrew Scriptures to God.

It is somewhere in this body of writing, given by God, that He has spoken “of the seventh *day* in this way.” He is equating God's rest with the seventh day after creation. This is then supported by quoting the Scripture which says, “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.” This is a quote from Genesis 2:2. God worked six days and then He rested on the seventh.

It is noticeable that each of the six days of creation was followed by a statement which said, “So the evening and the morning were the [nth] day.” However, no such statement is given for the seventh day. God rested, and that state of rest continues on. It is speaking of the work of creation itself which is given as a pattern of the dispensations of redemptive history. There are seven dispensations, the last being the millennium.

The millennium, then, forms its own picture of God's place of rest. This was what Canaan was to be for those who were redeemed from Egypt, but they did not receive their rest because of unbelief. And so God, through the author of the psalm, set another day which He called, "Today" (verse 4:7). Those who believe Today enter God's rest (verse 4:3) which has been anticipated since the creation of the world. But it must be remembered that chapter 3 spoke of the Hebrew people in the plural. The promise of rest was given to them. It is accessible individually, but it is also left for them collectively. The rest of God is provided not through works of the law, but through belief in what the law pointed to, Christ. Until Israel comes to this collective understanding, they will not enter God's rest as a people. Until then, only those who believe individually have access to this rest.

God rested from His works, and yet God's work of redemption occurs within the stream of time through the work of Jesus Christ. The seventh day after creation is God's resting from His labors, and yet His labors continue on in the Person of Jesus in anticipation of a final day when God's people will enter the place of God's rest. Understanding this, we can then grasp what Jesus was speaking of in John 5 –

"For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.'

¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. ¹⁹ Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.'" John 5:16-19

Christ's works lead His people to the state of rest in His place of rest. This is seen in Isaiah 11:10 which speaks of the millennial reign of Christ. There, the word used is *menukhah*, the place (noun) of rest seen in Psalm 95, not *shabat*, or the state (verb) of rest found in Genesis 2 –

“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.” Isaiah 11:1

Everything centers on what God has done and continues to do in Christ Jesus.
Entering into God’s rest comes by faith (belief) in God’s word as it points to Him.

Life application: The concept of God’s rest is being precisely stated by the author of Hebrews for the express purpose of getting his Hebrew audience to understand their need for Jesus, both individually and collectively. For any who believe in Christ Jesus (Jew or Gentile), they enter God’s rest; ceasing from their labors. For Israel as a whole, they will enter God’s rest when they have been refined and purified through the tribulation. Someday, they will collectively believe in Him, and they will enter into His promised rest, a rest which they have thus far failed to enter.

Gracious and merciful Lord God! We know that Your works have been finished from the foundation of the world, and that Your rest is available to us as a promise. The question is, “How do we enter that rest?” The answer comes back to us from the pages of Scripture as “Believe in the One whom You have sent.” Christ accomplished all that was necessary to grant us access into that wonderful place of rest. Thank You for what You have done through Him. We believe He did it all, and so we receive what You promise. Thank You for Jesus our Lord. Amen.

...and again in this *place*: “They shall not enter My rest.” Hebrews 4:5

Here we have a repetition from verse 4:3. God had rested (verb) on the seventh day, and yet the Psalmist said that the Hebrews of Moses’ time did not enter God’s rest (noun) because of unbelief. A place of rest was promised to the Hebrew

people, but those with Moses did not enter into that place, and therefore it logically follows that some must still enter it (as verse 4:6 will explicitly state).

God rested from His works of creation on the seventh day. This implies that everything in creation has been completed; there is nothing else to create. If there is a place of rest within that creation as is clearly the case, and that place of rest is promised to the Hebrew people, then it logically follows that it is still awaiting them.

We are not to forget, however, that any who have believed do enter that rest (verse 4:3). This is true whether it is a Jew or a Gentile that believes in the finished work of Christ. We have attained what God has promised. But the promise to Israel collectively has not yet been attained. Until they, as a people, believe in the completed work of Messiah, they will not enter that place of rest. But it will happen. The prophecies of the Bible show it is coming. It didn't happen at the time of Moses, meaning those under the law, but it will happen in Christ Jesus.

Life application: The repetition of the verses in Hebrews is given for precision of thought. A place of rest exists for the people of God. As God finished His works of creation and then rested, the place which is being spoken of was there in the creation at that time. It is a place intended for occupants to enter. Who will enter it? Those who have faith in His works, meaning that which is accomplished by Messiah within the stream of time which came at creation. Through faith in Him, that place of rest is granted. Believe in Christ, and enter God's rest.

Lord, how faithful You are to Your promises! Though it may not be pleasant, why should we worry when things are difficult or filled with trial? These cannot take away the surety of the good things which lie ahead, and which You have promised, for those who trust in You. And so may we be joyful in our hope even if troubled in the here and now. Because of Jesus, only goodness and blessing is coming. Thank You that we are assured of this. Amen.

Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, Hebrews 4:6

In this verse, we have a continuation of the same logical progression of thought which has been presented:

- 1) God's labors of creation are ended and He rested.
- 2) He promised rest to His people Israel. This rest was offered to those who came out of Egypt with Moses. However, that same rest was not appropriated by Moses, nor was it appropriated by Joshua (verse 4:8) who followed after Moses, and who brought Israel into Canaan. Because of this,
- 3) It, therefore, "remains that some must enter it." What this means is "that which was available in past times still remains available." Because it is promised, and because the promise was not laid hold of, the promise remains unappropriated.

This will be made evident in the coming verses. But for now, the author states it as a fact. And the reason for this is that "those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience." As noted in verse 4:2, the term "preached" is not appropriate. It should say, "those who were the first to receive the announcement of the good news." The Israelites were informed that they were selected as God's people, and would receive the promised inheritance of His rest. However, because of disobedience, meaning unbelief, they did not enter into His rest.

With this understanding, we need to refer back to verse 4:3 which said, "For we who have believed do enter that rest." It is clear that he is speaking of belief in the finished work of Messiah. The promise of entering God's rest is open to His people Today. Any who believe in what Jesus has accomplished enter into God's rest because Today is still available for them to enter. And yet, the promise of entering God's rest is not confined to individuals calling on Christ. It is also a promise which

is intended for Israel as a people group. Unless one believes that the church has replaced Israel, a teaching which is contrary to the entire tenor of Scripture, it must be that Israel as a collective whole will enter into His rest at some point.

Life application: Jesus saves. There is no salvation apart from Him. Individually, when we call on Christ, we will be saved. At that time, we enter into God's rest. However, it is Jesus who also will save Israel collectively. As a people, they have definite and sure promises which pertain to them. On some day, called Today, they will call on Him and be saved.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful assurance that You are with us at all times. For those who have come to You through Christ, there is no place we can go, no trial which is too great, and no pain which is too grievous that we can say, "Where have You gone, O God." Rather, we can confidently say, "Thank You for being here with me at this time." Help us to remember this, and to never feel that we have been abandoned by You. Amen.

...again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said:

**"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts." Hebrews 4:7**

The author continues his logical presentation of the sequence of events leading up to the rest which is promised to Israel. Again, it must be remembered that there is individual rest, and there is a rest provided to the collective body. The individual rest is the assurance granted to a person when believing in the finished work of Christ (verse 4:3), but Israel has still been promised rest as well. He now continues with that thought with the words, "again He designates a certain day."

The rest was promised, but the psalmist shows that Israel failed to attain it. That is seen in the words of Psalm 95:11 –

“So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

However, before having said that, and while speaking to Israel directly, the psalmist says, “Today, if you will hear His voice.” A new day is being designated. In essence, “Listen all of you, your fathers disobeyed and I did not allow them the promised rest. However, Today is a new chance! Heed the voice of the Lord, for the rest is yet ahead!”

This promise of a new “certain day” came through the hand of David. As it says, “saying in David.” If you will take a moment and go back to the 95th Psalm, you will see that no author is named. And yet, the author here in Hebrews, based on the Greek translation of the Old Testament, says that it was David. Before going on, make a pen and ink note in your Bible above the psalm saying, “David is the inspired author according to Hebrews 4:7.”

Understanding this is at the time of David, many hundreds of years after Israel’s entrance into Canaan (a bit more than 400 years from that time, and about 3000 years since the creation after which God is said to have rested), our author then says, “after such a long time, as it has been said.” He will now cite the psalm which came so much later than the Exodus, showing that the promise of rest still remains. It was not laid hold of by Israel in the past, and the promise has not been revoked by the Lord. Though Israel failed, God remains faithful. This is then seen with the words being cited from Psalm 95:7, 8 –

“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts.”

David could not say this concerning an issue which did not exist. If the promise to Israel was revoked, he could not have spoken of Today in relation to the past, yet unfulfilled, promise. But he does. "The promise was not attained, however, Today it is still open! Pay heed! Hear the voice of the Lord! The rest is yet ahead! Today is not yet over!" If Israel fails to heed, they too will again not enter into His rest. When they do, they will finally attain that which has so long been kept from them.

Life application: Let us logically look at the issue of rest for Israel. 1) What is the promised rest offered to them? It is rest resulting from having faith in Jesus as their Messiah. 2) Did Israel receive Him as such? No. Individually, many Jews did, but as a nation, they did not. They were dispersed and punished for rejecting Him. 3) Does the promise still stand? Yes, it must because the author of Hebrews says, "Today." It is a day which any can come to Christ individually, and so the church has taken it as such for 2000 years. However, the promise is to Israel in the psalms, the promise is repeated to the Hebrews in the book of Hebrews, and the placement of Hebrews after the Gentile-led church-age epistles indicates that it is still open to them collectively at some future point, included in the word, "Today." When you pray, be sure to pray for Israel. Pray that they will call on the Lord and enter His rest while it is still Today.

Lord God, there is a story of love, hope, grace, mercy; and of wrath, punishment, exile, and restoration all tied up in one group of people, Israel. Throughout their history, they have wandered away from You, breaking the covenant and rejecting Your word. And yet, You have been faithful to keep Your side of things, maintaining them and preparing them for a glory which lies yet ahead. In Your faithfulness to them, we can be assured of the same for each of us. What comfort we can take in this! Thank You, our ever-faithful Lord. Amen.

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. Hebrews 4:8

The author speaks now of Joshua son of Nun who succeeded Moses, and who led Israel across the Jordan and into Canaan. There was a rest promised to Israel which was not attained, despite their having entered the Promised Land. Scripture does speak of entering Canaan as a type of rest several times. The Lord promised rest to Moses in Exodus 33:14. Moses spoke of the prospects of rest in Deuteronomy 3:20 and 12:9 as well. And then in Joshua 23:1 it says –

“Now it came to pass, a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age.”

However, this cannot be the state of rest spoken of in the psalm. Rather, it was merely a lesser type of rest. There was a more full and blessed rest which was still anticipated – the “rest” of God. This is evident because the author has spoken of it in exactly those terms already, and now he says, “For if Joshua had given them rest.” The implication is that through Joshua’s leadership, the promised rest had not been attained. Entering and possessing the land of Canaan is not all that encompasses the thought of “God’s rest.” Because of this, the verse continues with, “then He.”

The “He” here is speaking of the Lord. The author is referring to the words of the psalm again which said, “Today.” If the full and complete promise of rest had been attained at the time of Joshua, the psalmist would have no basis for saying, “Today,” and then saying of those in the past that “They shall not enter My rest.” That they did not enter into the Lord’s rest is verified by the author with the words, “then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.”

The point then is that what is anticipated in the promise of rest is yet future to the time of the psalmist, and it is even open and available concerning the time of the writing of Hebrews. This will be verified in the coming verse.

As a final note, some translations say, “Jesus” instead of “Joshua” in both this verse and in Acts 7:45. The names are the same in the Greek. This is true in both the Old Testament Greek, and here in the New Testament. The context of both

passages clearly speaks of Joshua the son of Nun. It is true that Joshua is a type of Christ to come, but type and substance are not the same. The older translations which say “Jesus” in these two verses leave the reader with a false idea about what is being relayed. In the New Testament, when Jesus is referred to in relation to the work of the Lord in the Old Testament, the term “Lord” or “Christ” is used.

Life application: There is rest, and then there is rest. A person can build a house, put up walls around his property, and call it “rest from his enemies” as is stated of Israel at the time of Joshua. And yet, that person may not believe in Jesus at all. If so, then he has not entered into God’s promised rest, even though he has “rest” in a lesser sense. We can only truly say that we have attained God’s rest through the full, final, and finished work of Jesus Christ. It is through Him that we enter into God’s rest.

How marvelous and how wonderful it is to share in Your goodness, O God. This is true for all people who can enjoy those things which delight our five senses. You have given us so much in this way. But those things are temporary and perishing. The true goodness we now have is what comes through a personal relationship with You because of Jesus. In Him, we can enjoy You and share in You in a completely new and glorious way. May those who have never received this gift reach out and do so today! What a blessed taste of future glory we have, even now, because of Jesus! Amen.

There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. Hebrews 4:9

The same word translated in verse 4:6 as “remains” is used again here. There it said, “Since it therefore remains that some *must* enter it.” This was speaking of God’s rest. Now the author clearly and concisely states what he has so methodically been building up to by saying, “There remains therefore.” The author, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says unambiguously that the day, called Today, still allows for obtaining what was once denied, which is “a rest for

the people of God.” Further, as Charles Ellicott says, “It is tacitly assumed that no subsequent fulfillment has altered the relation of the promise.”

As noted in the comments of verse 4:6, what this means is “that which was available in past times still remains available.” Because it is promised, and because the promise was not laid hold of, the promise remains unappropriated. And though unappropriated, it is also not retracted. What is not noticeable in the English, but which blazes forth in the Greek, is that the word for “rest” is not the same as has been used thus far. The word is *sabbatismos*, a Sabbatism. It is an emphatic verbal noun which occurs only this once in all of the Bible. It is a derivation of the word *sabbaton*, or Sabbath day. Thus, it signifies (as some translations more appropriately translate it) a keeping of “Sabbath-rest.”

This then takes the thought all the way back to Genesis 2:2 where God is said to have “rested” on the seventh day. The word is *shabath*, the verb from which the idea expressed in the noun Sabbath is derived. God rested, implying He had a rest. It is this rest that has remained unappropriated but not retracted. But to whom is this directed? It is a Sabbatism “for the people of God.” The question then is, “who is this referring to?” Many Christian scholars say that it is a type of heaven for the church, or the “true Israel.”

However, it has already been seen that those who believe have entered their rest. It is a place of rest which is granted by faith in Christ. No distinction can be made between Jew and Gentile. It simply says that those who believe have entered. And yet, there is the unappropriated offer of entering into God’s rest for the people of God. This term is notably used in the New Testament, with certain exception when speaking of the Gentile-led church, to speak of Israel.

Thus, it is not a “spiritual Israel” that has replaced the people of Israel, but actually the people known as Israel. Speaking of the literal people of Israel, Paul uses the term “His people” in Romans 11:1 & 2. The author of Hebrews, speaking of the “house of Israel and the house of Judah,” uses the term in Hebrews 8:10. He also calls Israel “the people of God” in Hebrews 11:25. Peter informs his Jewish audience that they “once *were* not a people but are now the people of God.”

The implication is that they were rejected by God, but then after that rejection, they are once again called as His people. Even Paul, in Galatians 6:16, speaks of the "Israel of God." That does not refer to Gentiles who have replaced Israel, but rather those Israelites who have come to Christ in contradistinction to those Jews who have not. And finally, the audience of the book of Hebrews is the Hebrew people. The overwhelming evidence then points to the subject of this verse now as the Jewish people. It is they who are being referred to.

The rest which remains for them, that of the true rest found in Christ Jesus, remains open to them. With this understanding, this does not negate that Gentiles are included in this. Anyone who believes in Christ Jesus' finished work is granted this rest. But the context is that the "people of God" being referred to are the people of Israel. It is they who were with Joshua (verse 4:8), and it is they to whom the psalmist wrote the words of the 95th Psalm.

Life application: The rest of God which has been from the foundation of the world is a rest which can be entered into by trusting in the completed work of Jesus Christ. It is He, and only He, who makes this possible. One cannot earn heaven by taking a weekly Sabbath, nor can one earn heaven by refraining from eating certain meats. One is not granted heaven because he is circumcised. The only way one can enter into this blessed state is to trust that Christ did all of these things already. He has merited for us what we could never do. Trust in the Lord, and enter into His rest.

Glorious God, why do we always attempt to merit Your favor through external rites? "Keep the Sabbath." "Don't eat that type of food." "Cut your flesh to stand approved." None of those things can bring us a step closer to You because we are already infected with sin. Only Jesus, born without sin, and who fulfilled the law on our behalf, can make us right with You. May we rest in Him alone, never trusting in our own deeds as a means of attaining that which You offer through grace. Amen.

For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. Hebrews 4:10

The words of this verse are set against the words of verse 4:9. There it said, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” It was established in that commentary that the “people of God,” in the appropriate context, is specifically speaking of the Jewish people. There remains a “Sabbatism” for them.

To ensure that this is understood, the author now says, “For he who has entered His rest.” The verb translated as “entered” is in the aorist tense. Therefore, it “marks the completeness of the appropriation – once and for all” (Vincent’s Word Studies). This is then tied into verse 4:3 where it said, “we who have believed.” It is in the same tense. Those who have believed then enters God’s (His) rest. If someone enters His rest (as it is clearly stated in verse 4:3 that “we who have believed do enter that rest”), as those who have believed in Jesus have, then he “has himself also ceased from his works.”

The translation here is lacking. It should say, “has himself also rested from his works.” The entire passage has been speaking about the state of rest. It is true that resting implies ceasing from labor, but ceasing from labor may not necessarily mean resting. A person may be doing one thing and then pick up and do another. But when one rests, they stop doing all things. Thus, maintaining the consistency of translation here explains the state of having entered the “Sabbatism” of the previous verse.

When a person believes in Christ Jesus, they enter into God’s rest. In entering God’s rest, they rest from their own works. Well, what works are being referred to? Commentaries generally assume that it is speaking of the toils and labors leading to the aches and pains of this life. This fails to explain the true meaning of a Sabbath observance by Israel. The purpose of the Sabbath was to be a sign to them (Exodus 31:17) that they were, in fact, God’s people. He did the work in redeeming them, and He did the work in sanctifying them. They rested from their weekly labors as a sign of this. They “did” Sabbath, because they “could” Sabbath.

The unending labor could be ceased because God still provided for them, even on the Sabbath (hence, a double portion of manna was given on the sixth day, etc).

Before explaining what “works” are being referred to, it should be noted that John Gill states that “he” at the beginning of the verse is speaking not of “whoever,” but of Jesus. “For He (Jesus) who has entered His (God’s) rest.” That is possible based on the context. If that is so, it is speaking of the labor of works under the law, completing God’s works which were “finished from the foundation of the world” (see verse 4:3). As noted then, Christ simply completed what was ordained from the foundation of the world. Bringing to man the ability to enter God’s rest through His completed work.

Understanding this, we can assume that “he” in this verse is either “Jesus” or “whoever.” Though important in proper analysis, it is not important in application. The reason is that even if Jesus is being referred to and not “whoever,” it doesn’t change the outcome. If it is Jesus, He has rested from His works designated by God. If it is us, we have rested because of Jesus’ works. Again, verse 4:3 says that “we who have believed (meaning in Jesus’ completed works) do enter that rest.”

We are, from the moment of belief, positionally “in Christ.” Thus, the “works” being referred to are works of pleasing God in order to be saved, and which allow man to enter into God’s promised rest. In other words, the works are either Christ’s works or “faith in Christ’s works.” As you can see, the outcome is the same. We have no works pleasing to God apart from Christ, but we are fully pleasing to God, and accepted by Him, through Christ’s works. We are “in Christ,” and have rested from our works, because He has rested from His.

This is then further explained by the final words of the verse, “as God *did* from His.” God created in six days, and He rested on the seventh. As the scholar Bengel says, “Labour precedes rest; ... The work and rest of GOD are that archetype to which we ought to be conformed.” This is true with whatever labor and rest are being spoken of. It is true of God’s creation leading to rest, it is true of Israel’s Sabbath where they worked and then rested, and it is true with us who put our trust in Christ who has labored, and who then rested.

There is the type and then there is the Archetype. As always, pictures in the Old are merely given to point to the realities of Christ in the New. God rested after His labors, Christ rested after His, and we rest after ours (of which Christ accomplished for us). Hence, “we who have believed do enter that rest.” It is done!

The contrast of this verse is what is certain. The “people of God” of verse 4:9 is speaking of Israel collectively. They have not yet entered into God’s rest. That will only occur when they, as a people, trust in the work of the Lord Jesus. Individually, they can enter God’s rest even now, but as a people, that time is yet ahead.

Life application: Yes, it is actually important who “he” is being referred to in this verse. For the sake of giving an answer, I would say that it is “whoever.” This is based on the contents of verse 3 which are followed by the words of Psalm 95. Those same words are reexplained here in verse 10, and which were preceded by another quote from Psalm 95. However, if John Gill is correct, and it is speaking of Jesus, the outcome of the thought does not change. The person who trusts in Jesus’ completed work enters God’s rest, just as Jesus did after the completion of His work.

Lord God, Your word is big, it is often complicated, and it can overwhelm us when we try to understand its complexities. And yet, the overall message is simple, concise, and unchanging – You sent Jesus to do what we cannot do. When we trust in His completed work, we are saved, we remain saved, and we are given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of that salvation. Help us not to muddy the waters which show that we are saved by grace through faith, and there is nothing we need to do to add to that. Amen.

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:11

The author has shown that the promised rest of God is yet future for the Hebrew people. In verse 4:9, he has stated that there is a Sabbath-rest which is yet available for the people of God. It has been shown that the context of “people of God” is referring to Israel collectively. Individuals of both Jew and Gentile enter into “that rest” by belief (verse 4:3), but there is a time of rest for Israel as a people which is yet ahead. With this understanding, he says, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest.”

The word “diligent” is from a Greek word signifying eagerness or zeal. HELPS Word Studies says it is “acting *fervently* (*speedy* commitment) to accomplish all that God assigns through faith (‘His inbirthed *persuasion*’).” Many commentaries grab onto this and explain that this means that we must be diligent as individuals to work in order to attain rest (meaning heaven). Albert Barnes, bizarrely says, “Heaven is never obtained but by diligence; and no one enters there who does not earnestly desire it, and who does not make a sincere effort to reach it.” That statement is so far from Ephesians 2:8, 9 that it is incredible to even contemplate.

The author has clearly stated that we enter our rest through belief. Nothing he says after that will contradict that one statement, and so this cannot be speaking of us “working” in order to be saved. Rather, we believe, and we enter into God’s rest. Period. On this verse, John Gill rightly says of salvation –

“...salvation is not by works; eternal life is a free gift; good works do not go before to prepare heaven for the saints, but follow after: nor is the saints' entrance into it a precarious thing; God has promised it, and provided it for his people; Christ is in the possession of it, and is preparing it for them; and the Spirit of God is working them up for the self same thing, and Christ will give them an abundant entrance into it.”

John Gill then says that this verse is not speaking of God's rest, but the "Gospel rest ... which believers now enter into, and is at this present time for them." Though he was right about salvation, he is incorrect about this. The author has been speaking of the rest promised by God. There is nothing to suggest that he has departed from that. And so what is the author of Hebrews saying now? The answer is that he first speaks of the whole, saying "us." He then moves to the singular in the second clause with the words, "lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."

The author is asking his audience to watch out for one another. It is exactly what he said to them already in verses 3:12, 13. The people are to be diligent in laboring to enter the rest. They are the people of God, and they have not yet entered that rest. It is incumbent on them to warn one another against failing to believe. It took a bad report by ten of the twelve spies to poison the minds of the entire congregation against entering Canaan. The author is warning against such an attitude again.

As this was written to the first century Jews, it is evident that they once again failed to attain what they had hoped for. However, due to its placement in the Bible after Paul's epistles and, more importantly, because of God's unfulfilling promises, it is evident that the promised rest for Israel is still open to them even now. It will come, and Israel will attain what it has thus far been unable to apprehend.

Life application: It cannot be that a verse in the Bible will contradict another verse. If we are told that someone is saved by grace through faith, it cannot be that another verse will mean that we must labor in order to be saved. Therefore, there must be another meaning to the words than what is at first presumed to be said. For this verse, John Gill understood and gave a second option. However, his option removed itself from the immediate context of what was being presented. And so a third option must exist which accepts both a non-contradictory stand concerning salvation, and which retains the proper context. This is how we are to evaluate Scripture. We are to always maintain context, and we are to ensure that truths which are presented elsewhere are not to be violated in our analysis of what we are studying.

Heavenly Father, Your word says that we are saved by grace through faith and that works are not a part of the process. May we never deviate from this clear, concise, and obvious truth. Our justification is by faith alone. Because of the work of Jesus Christ, we stand approved before You. What could we add to what He has done? Nothing. So let us not go there! Amen.

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

The verse now begins with “For.” Actually, in the Greek, it says, “Living (is), for, the word of God...” Thus it stresses the thought of “living.” But the word “for” is used to build upon a previous thought. That takes the reader all the way up to verse 4:2 which said, “For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them.” At that time, it was explained that the word “gospel” should read, “good news.” Further, “the word which they heard” literally reads “the word of the message.” That was referring to the word of God which promised rest.

After that came the intervening verses which explained God’s rest in great detail, including quotes from Psalm 95. This context explains the word “For.” The “word of the message,” meaning the word of God, was preached to those before, and it made its judgment. The same word of God still speaks to the Hebrew audience, awaiting a response.

The term, “the word of God,” here was thought by the church fathers to be speaking of the Person of Jesus. This is not the author’s intent. Outside of John’s writings, the term is not used in relation to Jesus, nor is it hinted at in the book of Hebrews. Rather, it is speaking of the word of God, meaning His utterances – in whatever manner they come. They may come through prophets, or through Scripture. His word also came through Jesus as He spoke out the word of God. It is

this word of God which the author now says is “living and powerful.” As noted, the word “living” is in the emphatic position.

It is not a dead word, but one with vibrancy. It is not a weak word, but one which has power to produce an outcome. As Vincent’s Word Studies notes, “The message of God which promises the rest and urges to seek it, is no dead, formal precept, but is instinct with living energy.” Just as a living body accomplishes actions, so the word is capable of the same. There is power which comes forth from an animate being, and that is true with the word of God. There is almost a personification of the word in the author’s mind.

He next says it is “sharper than any two-edged sword.” The word “two-edged” is *distomos*. It signifies “two mouthed.” The symbolism here comes directly from the Old Testament where “the edge of the sword” is literally, “the mouth of the sword.” It is a devouring instrument, consuming that which it comes in contact with. Being a mouth, it is then likened to a drinker of blood. Being two-mouthed, it is a consumer of blood. No matter which side is presented, its effect remains the same. And so, the sword is used to describe destruction throughout the Old Testament, and even into the New. Jesus uses the terminology of the sword to describe the fate of the Hebrew people in Luke 21:24 –

“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

The passage in Luke uses the same imagery, the “mouth of the sword.” Why would this come upon the Jewish people? Because He knew they would reject the word of God. Thus, this living and active, devouring instrument would actively consume them. So effective is it that it is capable of “piercing even to the division of soul and spirit.”

The Greek word used here for “piercing” is unique in Scripture. It means “coming through.” thus, it wholly penetrates even to the division of soul and spirit. This is not intended to mean that the “soul and spirit” are divided one from another. The word “division” does not refer to the point of division, but the act which occurs. The word is only used elsewhere in Hebrews 2:4. There it speaks of the “gifts” or “distributions” of the Spirit. The spirit is One, without division, but there are many gifts. Understanding this, and to confirm it as well, the author then says, “and of joints and marrow.”

Joints and marrow don’t have contact with one another where it can be said that they can be so divided. Thus, this is an explanation of “soul and spirit.” It is not a point of division, but the act. Similarly, “joints and marrow” are likewise to be taken figuratively, not as actual joints of a person, or the marrow of the bone. Again, Vincent’s Word Studies explains the terminology –

“The form of expression is poetical, and signifies that the word penetrates to the inmost recesses of our spiritual being as a sword cuts through the joints and marrow of the body. The separation is not of one part from another, but operates in each department of the spiritual nature.”

“Soul and spirit” are joined in the words as an example of that which is inmost spiritually. “Joints and marrow” are joined in the words as an example of that which is inmost physically. Thus, though there are two groupings, they are four individual things – “division of soul, of spirit, of joints, of marrow.” The word of God pierces everything about the individual, and nothing is hidden from its all-consuming, devouring mouth. This is so much so that it is even “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The word “discerner” is also unique in Scripture. It is an adjective which also implies division. It means “able to judge,” or “critical.” It separates things through an evaluation process. Thus, it separates thoughts of the heart. Those things which the heart ponders and deliberates upon are known and separated by the word of God, sorting them out for judgment. It also separates the intents of the heart. These are the things which have been settled out, such as opinions and

attitudes. A person may be a conservative or a liberal. They have settled out their opinions, and that is where they stand on the issues. The word of God will look at these things and evaluate them.

As a real-life example, a person may be either against abortion or for it. The word of God discerns the matter and judges it. It separates the two (or any middle ground such as “in certain cases”) and it makes the determination as to which is acceptable and which is not.

The entire tenor of the words of this verse are geared towards the attitude of the people concerning God’s rest. The word of the message (verse 4:2) is given. The people will be evaluated based on the word of God. Will they be diligent to enter that rest? This is the question, and the word of God will sort out the truth of that matter from the very fiber of their being.

Life application: There is no part of us that is not known to God. There is no thought that we have, no opinion that we are settled upon, and no attitude that we display which is not able to be evaluated, completely and entirely, by the word of God. We are open and exposed in our lives and actions as if we stand naked before Him. Let us not attempt to cover our faults, failings, and faithlessness with fig leaves. But rather, let us adorn ourselves with the covering of Christ. Nothing else will suffice when we come before God for our evaluation.

Lord God, Your word shows that there is no part of us which is not exposed before You. Your word stands as a discerner of every thought, motivation, and settled opinion which we possess. We are as naked before You as our first parents were when they were created. Should we attempt to cover ourselves with the leaves of fig trees? Rather, shouldn't we be found covered by the righteousness of Christ? Only in His perfection can we stand before You cleansed and pure. May we be wise and discerning about what judgment before You means. And may we choose the good covering of Christ in preparation for that day. Amen.

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:13

The previous verse explained that the word of God possesses the ability to completely open up the very essence of a person. That is now complemented with the notion that no person can hide from that scrutiny. The logic is that if this verse was not added, someone might say, “Well, the word of God may be able to get to the very heart of the matter in man, but I will simply hide myself from that word.” However, the author now shows the impossibility of that by saying, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight.”

Nowhere someone travels, no abyss that they climb down into, and no place of the deepest darkness can keep a person hidden from the eyes of God. This is seen, for example, in Psalm 139 –

“If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’
Even the night shall be light about me;
¹² Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,
But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.” Psalm 139:11, 12

Job 34:22 speaks of this as well. Man, wherever he is, and no matter how secretly he thinks he is conducting his affairs, is completely surrounded by the all-seeing presence of God. Understanding this, it is still the word of God of the previous verse which is the subject, but it is God’s presence, which is everywhere, which then touches all men through His word. This is then again evidenced by the words, “but all things.” He is referring to man and the deeds of man. Everything that makes up the individual, and which cannot be hidden from His sight, is “naked and open to the eyes of Him.”

The word “naked” is exactly translated. The idea takes the reader back to Genesis 2 & 3 where Adam and Eve were naked before the Lord. First, they were naked and unashamed, but then after their disobedience, they were naked and ashamed. Their state of exposure didn’t change in a physical sense, but it did change in a moral sense. Nothing has changed since then. We can cover ourselves with layer upon layer of garments, but we are just as naked before the Lord as Adam and Eve were before they sewed together fig leaves in an attempt to hide their shame.

The word “open” is *trachélizó*. It is found only here in the Bible. It signifies “to seize by the throat or neck, i.e. To expose the gullet of a victim for killing (generally, to lay bare) – opened” (Strong’s Concordance). One can see where the word trachea comes from in our modern languages. The idea is that one is most vulnerable when the neck is exposed. When a sacrificial animal is slain, its neck is exposed and the animal is slain. Likewise, a person may survive a wound in many parts of the body, but when the neck is cut, the lights go out. All men are as sheep going to the slaughter because of their always evident sin before the Lord.

As noted, the symbolism is directly tied to that of verse 12 which speaks of the word of God as a two-edged sword. It will devour all with the exception of those who are in Christ. As He is the Lamb slain for those He died for, then the penalty is paid. The devouring instrument will return to its sheath, and the soul and spirit shall be spared the work of the sword. For all others, what has been found wanting shall be exposed and it shall receive its fair and just due.

The author is using the most graphic example of the Hebrew society, and that which all would have been painfully aware of as they traveled to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices at the altar. What was given in type and shadow in those innocent sacrificial animals will either be accepted as having been accomplished in Christ, or it will be realized in them as God wields His sword of judgment.

Life application: The wages of sin is death. If sin is found in man as his judgment, that death, which already really and truly exists, shall be rewarded with eternity in the Lake of Fire. For those who are in Christ, the penalty is paid, the covering has been provided, and the sword shall not find a victim any longer.

Lord God, the sacrifices of Israel are a strong reminder to us of what we deserve. The animal was presented on fallen man's behalf, the innocent neck was laid bare, and the knife received its victim. That is what all men deserve because of sin – both inherited and committed. But Christ has taken our place. Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Thank You that we have this option. Thank You for the covering which has been provided. Thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Thank You, O God. Amen.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. Hebrews 4:14

The author now returns to the symbolism of the high priestly duties of the Lord, continuing the contrast between Him and the high priest of the Old Covenant, meaning the Aaronic priesthood. This thought was left off at Hebrews 3:1, but it was more fully explained in verses 2:17, 18 –

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”

The reason for returning to the idea of the high priestly duties now is because of what has just been said in verses 4:12, 13. Man is completely open and exposed before God, to whom we must give an account. Because of this, and because we are utterly without hope in this state, we need to have someone mediate for us.

This is the role of the High Priest, Jesus. And so he begins the verse with, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest.”

Aaron was a fallen man, chosen from among his brethren to minister as high priest. His priesthood was fallible, and it was fraught with failings even from the very beginning. However, everything about Christ Jesus (and thus His priesthood) is superior to that of what was seen in Aaron. In His humanity, He was born sinless, He lived without sin, and He died and was resurrected in that state. In this, He was exalted to sit at God’s right hand, as noted in Chapter 1. And more, He is also the divine Son of God, as was noted several times in the preceding chapters. It is He “who has passed through the heavens.”

The symbolism takes us back to the duties of the high priest of Israel. He performed sacrifices at the brazen altar. From there, and depending on the type of sacrifice, he took the blood of some of those sacrifices into the Holy Place, or even into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. In the case of the latter, He passed through the outer door, through the Holy Place, through the veil, and into the Most Holy Place. This all pictured what Christ would do, passing through the heavens, and even to the very throne of God. As God has rested from the labors of creation, Christ goes to that place of rest for us, thus providing us that rest (verse 4:3). Other duties of Christ as our great High Priest will be explained in the chapters ahead. For now, it is simply a statement that what occurred in the past was only a type, or shadow, of that which Christ literally fulfills for His people. Unlike Aaron, a son of Levi, it is instead “Jesus the Son of God.”

First the name – JESUS – means “Salvation.” It is that name which is above every other name (Philippians 2:9), and which carries the meaning of what He has accomplished for His people.

Next the title – THE SON OF GOD – signifies His divine nature. And so we see the uniting of His humanity and divinity in this verse. It thus shows that He can effectively mediate on behalf of humanity, even before the divine throne. It is He who is the bridge between the finite and the infinite. The gap, which was otherwise impossible to bridge, is spanned in Christ Jesus. His Person, position,

and duties are not only better than those of Aaron, they are infinitely better. And because of this, while speaking to his Hebrew audience, the author says, “let us hold fast *our* confession.”

They have the perfect Mediator: He is the divine Son of God. He has shared in their humanity. He suffered and was tempted, and is, therefore, able to aid those who are tempted. He has built His own house in the New Covenant. He is the propitiation for the sins of God’s people. By faith in His work, one enters God’s rest. And so on.

With all of this superiority, the author of Hebrews is showing that a return to the Old Covenant system is utterly pointless. It would be going from the greater to the lesser. Holding fast to the confession made in Christ is the only logical and proper choice to make. The case in this will continue to be presented, including the ramifications for failing to heed.

Life application: There are all kinds of views about the work of Christ, about the scope of that work, about the need to continue on with the Old Covenant system while also participating in the New Covenant system, and even about simply returning to the Old Covenant system. These varying views are all suggested by people in the world today. However, there is only one choice which is compatible with the words of the book of Hebrews. The author has established his baseline, and he will continue to build on that in the chapters to come. We are to come to Christ, be in Christ, and remain in Christ. We are to enter the New Covenant, and we are to remain in the New Covenant. Nothing else will do. Keep away from anyone who suggests that we are to hold to the Old Covenant in part or in whole.

Lord God, Christ Jesus initiated a New Covenant in His blood. Everything about the Old only anticipated the New. Nothing of the Old can save, and not participating in the Old cannot keep a person from being saved. Only Jesus can save, and only Jesus can keep on saving. Why would we return to a covenant that had no power to save? Help us to get our doctrine right, to call on Jesus, and to be saved – once and for all time – through His perfect work. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

The verse now continues to explain the nature of Christ Jesus. In verse 4:11, the author implored his audience to be diligent to enter God's rest "lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." This means they were to possess faith that God would lead them through. He then spoke of how God is able to know every failing of man because He can discern all things. Immediately, he then noted that Jesus is our High Priest, that He has "passed through the heavens," and that we are to hold fast our confession in him.

Understanding this train of thought, he now explains why this is possible for the reader to accomplish. It is because (For) "we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses."

The author is tying our weaknesses in with those who had fallen into the disobedience just mentioned in verse 11. They were weak, they failed to believe, and they failed to enter God's rest. But we have something more than they had. They had a fallible high priest who also disbelieved. They had a priesthood and a system that could never make them perfect. The law, though good, could never achieve bringing the people to their promised rest. Through it, man could never enter God's rest. That is, except for there being One who could fulfill that law, and who could then establish a New Covenant based on the fulfillment of the Old. In so establishing it, he would become its High Priest in the process. This is Jesus.

And not only is He the High Priest of this New Covenant, He is able to "sympathize with our weaknesses." The word is *sumpatheó*, and it is only found here and in Hebrews 10:34. In it, one can see where the word "sympathize" is derived from. As Vincent's Word Studies says, "This is more than knowledge of human infirmity. It is feeling it by reason of a common experience with (σύν) men."

Christ experienced everything we experienced. He was under the same law as Israel, He saw the limitations of the Levites and priests, He knew the burden of meeting the numerous laws contained within the Law of Moses, etc. He further knew the trials associated with hunger, weariness, and so on. The physical limitations of a man tend to weaken his spiritual and moral resolve. Because He experienced these things, He is able to minister as a High Priest with a sense of perfect empathy to those on whose behalf He ministers.

The importance of this is evident. Those in the wilderness had a fallen priest ministering on their behalf, and that ministry was between them and God. They had no idea about God's ability to empathize with them. They were bound by their physical limitations, He is not. It led to a feeling of being somewhat disconnected from Him. However, such cannot be said of Christ. He physically came and lived under that same law. The record of His life shows His sufferings, His physical limitations, the temptations He faced, and so on. Like Aaron, in Him is an example of the ability to empathize. But in Him is something greater. This is first because He "was in all *points* tempted as *we are*." This thought takes us back to verse 2:18, which said –

"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

There is no part of the human experience that we face that He did not face in some comparable measure. And so like Aaron, we have a high priest with this capacity. But between Aaron and God there was a disconnect. Aaron's priestly duties were limited because of his fallen nature. Such is not the case with Christ. This is evidenced in the final words of the verse. He was tempted as we are, "yet without sin."

This same idea is noted in 1 Peter 2:22, but even more, it was prophesied in the Old Testament, such as in Isaiah 53. The author will also note this about Christ again in Chapter 7 of Hebrews. Christ Jesus never sinned, and so in His work, He fulfilled the Law of Moses. Because of this, in His death, He brought the Law of Moses to its end for those who trust in Him. In Him, the law is annulled (7:18),

obsolete (8:13), and taken away (10:9). Now, through His establishment of a New Covenant, we have a high priest that is not only like Aaron, He far exceeds Aaron.

Aaron could only go into the Most Holy Place once a year, and never without a blood sacrifice for his own sin. Christ Jesus went through the heavens and to the very throne of God with His own blood, not for atonement of His sins, but for atonement of the sins of His people. He was and is pure, undefiled, perfect, and fully able to sympathize with our own shortcomings. Because of this we can, in fact, be diligent to remain faithful to our God – not in our own strength, but in the strength of Christ. The blessing and benefit of this will be seen in our next verse.

Life application: When you face your own doubts about your ability to come to God, look to Christ Jesus. He has gone to His Father before you, and He carries you with Him when He goes. For those who trust in Christ, for those who are “in” Christ, there is no need to worry if God has accepted you. He has. We have an infinite source of grace and mercy available to us because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, if we were still under the Law of Moses, our mediator would be a fallen, fallible man who possessed only limited access to You. We could never be sure of whether You truly sympathized with us or not. But in Christ, we have a New Covenant, established on better promises, and which is mediated by the perfect and undefiled Son of God. We have full and complete access to You because of our perfect High Priest. Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord who goes before us. Amen!

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

This is a well-loved, and often-cited, verse. It gives courage to the believer, and it is one which holds great importance for the one who is facing trials and difficulties. Countless well-intended and flowery comments have been made concerning it, applying it to the individual believer in their times of great need.

Having said that, proper context needs to be maintained in order to understand what is being conveyed. First, the context of the entire discourse has hinged on the idea of entering God's rest. In verse 1 of the chapter, it said, "since a promise remains of entering His rest." At that time, it was noted, "This is the key idea of the argument, and it is that upon which the whole discussion turns. There was the promise of rest, it was not believed by the people, and yet now the promise of rest still remains for God's people. The truth of the matter still stands; it is yet ahead in God's redemptive plans."

Nothing has changed in this. With this understanding, we can now grasp what the author is saying. He begins with, "Let us." The "us," based on the context, refers to the Hebrew people who are offered the promise of entering into God's rest. The chapter opens and closes with the same context. The author implores them to "therefore come." They have an offer which is available to them, and they are being told to go forward and appropriate that offer while it is still called Today. They are to come and they are to come "boldly." The Greek of the word signifies, "*confidence (bold resolve)*, leaving a witness that something *deserves to be remembered (taken seriously)*." (HELPS Word Studies).

This is the attitude that they are to employ. They are to have faith, and they are to use that faith in an open manner, exercising it plainly. This then is in contrast to those in the wilderness who did not enter because of disobedience. The people are to see Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises, and they are to accept that promise and appropriate it. With this understanding, the author next says that they are to come boldly "to the throne of grace."

The words are tied into the previous verses which spoke of the "great High Priest who has passed through the heavens." Thus, the symbolism is that of the Old Testament where the high priest would go forth on the Day of Atonement and seek a covering for the sins of the people, finding mercy from there at the throne of grace – meaning the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. That pictured the true place of propitiation, meaning Christ's shed blood. From the Cross of Calvary, to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, Christ's body was conducted. From there in His state of physical death, He accomplished the true, full, and final satisfaction of

the sin-debt for Adam's seed. To understand the symbolism of this from Exodus, please refer to this sermon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-VPtDW-qB8>

Thus, Christ is both the High Priest and the One who is there at the Throne of Grace, offering Himself to those who come. With this understanding, the author then says of coming to the throne of grace, "that we may obtain mercy." Of these words, Charles Ellicott says, "The real meaning is, receive compassion (Hebrews 2:17) in our weakness and trials. The thought of obtaining mercy for guilt is not in these words." This is incorrect. He rightly cites Hebrews 2:17, but that says, "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Two things are going on here. The first is the compassionate work of the High Priest (who is Jesus). The second is the merciful forgiveness of sin at the throne of grace (which is Jesus). Mercy is not receiving what is deserved. The author is imploring his audience to come boldly, because of our compassionate High Priest's access to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy at that same throne of grace. This receiving of mercy is then tied into the next words, "and find grace to help." Grace is receiving what is not deserved. The person deserves condemnation and does not receive it. The person does not deserve this mercy but obtains it. This is what is being conveyed now. The receiving of mercy, and the finding of grace to help, is then tied into the final words of the verse and the chapter, "in time of need."

The word translated as "time of need" is found only here and in Mark 6:21. It signifies a suitable time, a strategic time, or even a time of a holiday or festival. The idea is that of the Day of Atonement. That was fulfilled, in its entirety, by the Lord Jesus in His work. That idea is that the offer is still open Today to the Hebrew people. Until they appropriate it, they are not accepted by God, even though they are called the people of God. The seasonable time is the time of Christ's atonement. That time is open to any and all who come individually, and it is open to the people of Israel collectively as well. There is one, and only one, fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, but there is the availability of the efficacy of its effect while Today remains. In appropriating that work, those who so do will enter into God's rest.

With this understanding, we can now consider the idea of this verse being applied to individual believers. Though this is not the context of the verse, we can now question, "If we have come to the throne of grace in our time of need (meaning our need for atonement of our sins), and that was granted by God because of Christ, do we still have that same access now?" The answer is, "Yes." In Christ, the veil is rent, we have passed through to the Most Holy Place with Christ, and we are forever granted that access because of Him as our High Priest. And so, despite this verse speaking of the context described above, it can still be happily applied in the general sense which has been commonly applied to it. We will not damage the intent of the words using it in this way, as long as we understand the main context first and how it allows the secondary meaning.

Life application: Taking verses out of context, especially Old Testament verses which are spoken to Israel as a people, is not appropriate unless the truth can realistically be applied to us as individuals today. Care must be taken to always consider context first. From that, any secondary meaning can only be drawn if the main context allows it.

Lord God, help us to always keep our application of verses from Your word in their appropriate context. If we fail to do this, we can misappropriate claims to which we have no right. That will only lead to a false sense of reality within our churches and within our personal lives. May we have soundness in what we accept, apply only that which is appropriate, and so bring honor to You through this process. To Your glory alone may we live out our lives in Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 5

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Hebrews 5:1

The author begins Chapter 5 with “For” to ensure we consider the context of what has been said. In verses 5:14-16, the reader has been reminded of Christ’s suitability to mediate for us before God. He will now continue explaining why this is so. Understanding this, he says, “For every high priest taken from among men.” More rightly, it should say, “...being taken from among men.” The stress is on “men,” not on the “taking.” The fact that the high priest shares in the commonality of humanity is what is being stressed. The entire premise of the priesthood is that it can only be efficiently conducted if done so by a man. In this common bond of humanity, he “is appointed.”

The Greek word means to “put in charge.” It is what gives standing to him in order to exercise in a particular capacity. Aaron, for example, was appointed by the Lord. This selection is found in Exodus 28:1. And not only was he selected, but it was a selection which then established his house after him. It was designated to go from Aaron to one of his sons for the duration of the Mosaic covenant as is then seen in Exodus 29:9. Further, when a challenge was made to that priesthood, its validity was confirmed again by the Lord in Numbers 16 and 17. The authority of the priesthood was Aaron’s, but it was “for men.”

In other words, he was appointed to his duties, not just for himself, nor for Israel as a whole, but for the people of Israel in both an individual and a collective manner. As the human mediator, he was selected to mediate for men. It was he who bore the responsibility for the priesthood, and who was to symbolically take the sins upon himself and purge them through himself in the conduct of his duties. This is seen, for example, in the eating of the sin-offering by the priests, such as in Leviticus 6:26 and elsewhere. When a sin was committed by a high priest, that was handled differently. But for the men, he as a man was appointed “in things pertaining to God.”

Here the importance of the commonality of being a man is seen. God is perfect and cannot look upon sin. Therefore, in order for God to accept the people, the sin must be removed. But the mediator could not be other than a man. For example, it could not be an angel. The angel is in a different category and is unable to properly relate to the experiences, faults, and sins of the people. Further, it could not be an animal, as if the people could say, “This goat will mediate between us and God.” The goat can be offered for atonement (in type and picture of Christ only – see Hebrews 7:4), but it cannot perform the functions required of the priesthood. And the mediator could not be a stone or wood idol that the people petitioned to mediate between them and God. As obvious as that seems, it happens still in the world today. An idol of stone or wood (or whatever) is incapable of anything. There must be an acceptable priest to mediate the covenant in all things pertaining to God, and that priest must be a man. God has expectations, and only a man can understand those expectations – both from God and for man. This is so “that he may offer.”

The term “offer” is used in a technical sense. It literally means, “to bear toward.” In the Old Testament, it would correspond to the Hebrew word *qarab* when it is used in a similar sense. Both words can be used in a regular way, such as bringing a person to another person, but in relation to the priestly duties, it bears a technical sense. It is with this idea that the priests then offer, “both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

The law would not allow the people to bring these near to God on their own. Instead, they had to come through a mediator. The people, though considered as a holy nation, were not properly set apart or ordained as “holy” in the sense of priestly duties. Therefore, only one who was so set apart could then offer these offerings. As it says, “for sins.” Sin is the problem, and thus it necessitated a system which could effectively show the people this. In reality, the offerings of Aaron and his sons were ineffectual. They did nothing but withhold God’s wrath from the people temporarily. This is noted in Hebrews 7:4 (also referenced above). The rites and rituals of the priesthood, in every single detail, only looked forward to the full, final, and finished work of Jesus Christ. This will continue to become more evident with each verse and chapter which lies ahead.

Life application: The author has clearly shown in this verse that only a man can mediate on behalf of man. However, no man with sin can truly mediate in a way which will remove the sins forever. And all men have sin. Thus, there was a need for God to intervene. Only the God/Man could do this. This verse demonstrates the heretical nature of the teachings of cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons. The JWs claim Jesus is an angel. This is not possible according to this verse. The Mormons claim Jesus was a man who became a god. But man came from Adam and Adam was created by the Lord who is the One and only God. Mormonism is logically a failed system because it is based on an impossible regress. There is, and there can be, only one God. Understanding the content of Hebrews, which is more clearly understood by knowing the Old Testament, leads us to a clear picture of who Jesus is, and the importance of calling on Him properly – as the God/Man.

Heavenly Father, the logic displayed in the pages of the Bible is truly remarkable. Everything keeps pointing forward to the coming Christ. And upon His arrival, everything looks back on what He has accomplished, or forward to His coming again. No matter where we are in this magnificent book, we find Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of everything it says. Thank You for the giving of Jesus who makes all things new! Amen.

He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Hebrews 5:2

As noted in verse 5:1, every high priest is taken from among men. The stress of that thought was on the bond of humanity. We can see here the reason why this is so necessary. It is so that “he can have compassion.” The word used is a unique compound word, *metriopatheó*. Helps word studies defines it as –

*“...(from *metrios*, ‘mediating,’ derived from *metri*, “an instrument for measuring” and *páthos*, ‘feeling’) – properly, to *feel appropriately*, i.e. with *divinely-measured intensity* (‘God-controlled moderation’).”*

The high priest was not a stoic who was without feeling toward those he mediated for, nor was he overbearing in accusation, finding fault in every misstep made by them. Instead, because he shares in their humanity, he was to empathize with the people without being too tolerant of their faults that they should be wholly overlooked, nor should he be too severe that he finds a reason to have them ejected from the congregation for even the slightest mistakes. The high priest possesses feelings appropriate to the situation with a “God-controlled moderation” which is directed toward “those who are ignorant and going astray.”

The word “ignorant” is not necessarily speaking of one who is stupid. Rather, it is someone who simply doesn’t know about or recognize his wrongdoing. It may be from a lack of intelligence, or it may be from a lack of information. A distinction between intentional and unintentional sins is made in Numbers 15:22-29. The word now translated as “ignorant” would fall under the “unintentional” category there. The term “going astray” is the same one used in Hebrews 3:10, *planaó*. It is where the word “planet” comes from, because planets, unlike stars, seem to wander through the heavenly realm. It would then signify a person caught in sin by roaming into error, or by being misled.

In such cases, the high priest is able to see their wandering and have a moderated sense of their failing because “he himself is also subject to weakness.” The word here for “subject to” gives the idea of being hung or surrounded by. Thus, it is something that encompasses. The high priest is, like those he ministers for, encompassed by weakness. And that is exactly the word used to describe what Jesus did for the people in Matthew 8 where the words of Isaiah 53 are cited –

“When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,¹⁷ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:
‘He Himself took our infirmities
And bore *our* sicknesses.’” Matthew 8:16, 17

As can be seen, verses 5:1 & 2, which began with the word “For,” are given to explain what was stated as Chapter 4 closed out. As it said in verse 4:15, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.” The notable difference is that the high priest of Israel was encompassed with his own weakness, whereas Christ carried the infirmaries of the people for them. The difference between the two will lead us to the thought of the coming verses concerning the weakness of the high priest of the Old Covenant.

We are being shown the compassion of God towards fallen sinners in the Person of Jesus Christ. Because He shared in our human limitations, He is able to effectively mediate as one who can empathize with our failings.

Life application: Thank God for Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord God, it sure is wonderful that Jesus came into humanity. In this, He took on our infirmities and He bore our sicknesses. As a Man, He can fully empathize with our failings and faults, and He can then effectively mediate between You and us. We have a High Priest who is able to use the proper measure when we go astray, knowing personally who we are and what limitations we possess. Thank You for this wonderfully comforting knowledge. Amen.

Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. Hebrews 5:3

The words, “Because of this,” are given to explain the words of the previous verse, which said when speaking of the high priest, “since he himself is also subject to weakness.” The high priest was not a sinless person. He was born into humanity from a human father, and thus he received his first father’s original sin. Further, he was subject to weakness, meaning he incurred guilt through committed sin as

well. This made him able to be compassionate towards those who went astray, but it also meant that he required his own offering for sin just “as for the people.”

The book of Leviticus details the many sacrifices required under the Mosaic law, including offerings for sin. In the ordination of Aaron and his sons, and which would be required for any new priest after them, there was the necessity to offer a sin-offering. This is noted in Leviticus 8:2. The process of making this offering is then detailed later in the same chapter. The sin offering was required each day of the ordination process, and then when they were fully ordained, only then could the priests offer for the sins of the people, as is noted in Leviticus 9:7 & 9:15.

This is explained with the words, “so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins.” The very fact that the priests had to offer for their own sins, including the high priest himself, shows us the fallible nature of the Aaronic priesthood. They were tainted with sin, and they needed to have a substitute die in place of their failings before they could sacrifice for others.

And more, this didn’t just occur one time and then purify them forever from the need for a sacrifice for sin. Rather, each year on the Day of Atonement the high priest had to sacrifice a sin-offering for himself before he could offer one for the people. This was a clear indication that his ordination did not reckon him as sinless at all. Examples such as these show the fallible nature of the priesthood of Aaron.

But the most poignant example of all is found actually occurring on the final day of the priestly ordination of Aaron and his sons. On that day, after they had accomplished the sacrifice for their own sins, they sacrificed for the sins of the people. The priests were to then eat that sin-offering, thus symbolically taking the sins of the people upon themselves and purging them. However, two of the sons of Aaron died on that day, even after the sacrifices were complete. Later, Moses came and found that Aaron and his two remaining sons had not eaten the sin-offering, but had burnt it up. The following analysis of those verses from Leviticus 10 shows the absolute inability of the Aaronic priesthood to actually accomplish the purification of sin for themselves and for the people –

¹⁸ See! Its blood was not brought inside the *holy place*; indeed you should have eaten it in a *holy place*, as I commanded.”

Two different things are intended with the word “holy” in this verse. The first is speaking of the blood being brought into the holy place within the tent of meeting. This did not happen with this sacrifice, and therefore the meat was to be eaten, not burned up. The place where it was to be eaten is in a holy place, meaning within the sanctuary, but not within the holy place of the tent of meeting.

¹⁹ And Aaron said to Moses, “Look, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, and such things have befallen me!

Almost all scholars tie Aaron’s words in with his grief, and the grief of his sons, as being the reason for not eating the sin offering of the people, something prescribed by the law. However, this is not the case. Aaron will ask a conditional question based on what he has just noted to Moses, which is that the sons had offered their sin offering, and they had offered their burnt offering before the Lord. And further, they had done it *before* Nadab and Abihu had died. The offerings were on behalf of *all the sons*, not just the two living ones. And yet, two of them still died in sin on that day!

How could they eat the sin offering of someone else when they had not attained to the state of holiness which kept them from dying in their own sin? It is a giant mark upon the Aaronic priesthood, coming on the *last* day of the ordination process, which shows its completely fallible nature. It couldn’t even perfect its priests. As this is so, how could it be expected to perfect those who came to the Lord through those priests? Indeed, something much greater was needed for that to come about.

19 (continues) *If* I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?"

The answer to his question is obvious, "No." If the sin offering and the burnt offerings, which were intended to take care of the sins of the priests before they tended to the sins of the congregation, were tainted by what occurred, thus meaning the priests were also tainted, then how could they take on the sin of the people in order to purify them? Aaron's logic is impeccable, and it shows us how vastly inferior this priesthood is to that of Christ – infinitely so.

The sin of man could never be taken away by the blood of bulls and goats – case in point is the death of Nadab and Abihu. Add into that the future death of Aaron, and then the death of Moses who performed the installation of Aaron, and you have a completely failed system. However, the system itself is not the failure, it is the people within the system. And within the people is the true failure, sin. Contemplating David's words of the 51st Psalm shows to us the seed of failure contained within the Law of Moses –

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me." Psalm 51:5

David shows us that sin is, in fact, inherited. This was the case with Aaron and his sons, and the Law of Moses could not make them sinless. Only in the coming of Christ could this come about.

Life application: The analysis of the verses of Leviticus provided in this commentary is an abbreviated form of the sermon, Absolute Zero, given by Charlie Garrett of The Superior Word. To understand the entire context of what is presented in those verses, please take the time to watch this video of the sermon – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwlpH6a4H7A>

Lord God Almighty, we learn from the Bible that the Law of Moses could never adequately deal with the sin problem in man. Only in the coming of Christ could our sin nature be properly dealt with. Thank You for the surpassing greatness of the New Covenant which comes through the shed blood of Christ. Thank You for Jesus our Lord! Amen.

And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. Hebrews 5:4

This statement is tied to verse 5:1, which says, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed...” After saying that, the state of such an appointed priest was noted. The author now returns to the fact that the high priest is, in fact, appointed by saying, “And no man takes this honor to himself.” In these words, he is speaking of a legitimate high priest in the line of Aaron and for the role of mediation of the Mosaic law.

Aaron was specifically chosen, and the priesthood was given to him and to his line after him. Only those who met this qualification could rightly stand in this capacity. Further, Aaron and his sons, after selection, went through a lengthy and precise ordination process which then made them suitable to minister in this way. The honor wasn’t taken upon themselves, and the ordination process wasn’t invented by them. Instead, it was all by God’s choosing and by His instruction. Nothing concerning mediation between Himself and the people was left up to man. It was solely a work of God. This is then confirmed by the words, “but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.”

It is not of man who wills, but of God who chooses and appoints. There were usurpers to the priestly duties who are recorded in the Bible. For example, when the ten northern tribes broke away from Judah, the king of Israel appointed his own priests to minister at his own high places. This is recorded in 1 Kings 13:33, 34

—

“After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places.³⁴ And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy *it* from the face of the earth.”

Examples such as this, and examples of disobedient priests even from the line of Aaron (as recorded in both testaments), show us that something more precise was needed, The false priesthood of Israel, and the fallible nature of the Aaronic priesthood even in Judah, were incapable of bringing about perfection of the people. But to be restored to God, perfection is necessary. As the priesthood of Aaron was deficient in this manner, so is the law which brought about Aaron’s priesthood. This does not mean that the law which was given was not good, but rather it was sin in man which made it impossible to bring about that which was necessary to wholly restore man to God. A new calling would be necessary. That calling would be of a perfect Man, through a new covenant, and with an everlasting priesthood.

Life application: If the priesthood ministered by Aaron could not bring about perfection, and as it is superseded by the priesthood of Jesus, why would anyone go back to the law (of which Aaron ministered) in order to attempt to be pleasing to God? It shows either the height of stupidity to reject the greater priesthood, or it shows the utterly arrogant nature of the individual to want to work towards a rest which has already been granted by God through faith in Christ. The implication is that such a person believes that what Jesus did wasn’t good enough and that they can do a better job than Him. Don’t show yourself either stupid or arrogant. Instead, show that you are wise in Christ, and totally reliant on Him alone!

Lord God, only through the finished work of Christ can we enter into Your rest. When He shed His blood, He cried out, "It is finished!" Everything needed to restore us to You came about through what He has done. And so why would we ever revert back to a law which could never bring us to perfection? In Him, we are justified. In Him, we are sanctified. In Him we are glorified. Help us to not assume we can do it better than He did. Thank You for the finished work of Christ, and for the rest which is made available through it. Amen!

So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him:

"You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You." Hebrews 5:5

There is a definite article before "Christ" in this verse which is unfortunately left untranslated by most versions. However, the author is making a specific connection to the priesthood of Aaron by comparing it with the priesthood of Christ Jesus. It properly says, "So also the Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest."

The word "Christ" in Greek is the exact same in meaning as "Messiah" in Hebrew. Both mean "anointed one." In the books of Leviticus and Numbers, the term "the anointed priest," or "the priest who was anointed," is used several times when speaking of the high priest. Just as Aaron was selected by God to be the anointed priest, "So also the Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest." The comparison is made. Both of those who were so anointed did not choose themselves. Rather, both were chosen by God. This, however, does not mean that Jesus isn't God. Instead, it is speaking of His humanity which has been the subject of the author's words, especially since verse 4:15.

Jesus, as a human, was selected by God for this mediatorial role which would confirm Him as "the Christ," and who would also "Himself become High Priest." The author then confirms this by showing that Jesus was the subject of the 2nd

Psalm by saying, “but *it was* He who said to Him.” The “He” is speaking of the Lord (Yehovah); the “Him” is speaking of Jesus, who is the incarnation of Yehovah. This is first seen in Psalm 2:2 –

“The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, *saying...*”

The Lord (Yehovah in Hebrew) is mentioned along with “His anointed.” The words “His anointed” are from the Hebrew word *mashiakh*, or “messiah.” As noted already, the term “messiah” in Hebrew means “Christ” in Greek. The author is showing that the One who fills this role was chosen by God. However, the next verse (5:6) will show that this same One is also Yehovah, the Lord. Both are Yehovah. To set that up so that there can be no mistake about it when he gets to that verse, he finishes his thought of this verse by quoting Psalm 2:7, just as he did in Hebrews 1:5 –

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.”

This emphasis and highlight in using these same words, both in verse 1:5 and now here, is that verse 1:5 is in relation to the Christ being the anointed King. For example, in verse 1:8 it speaks of the throne and scepter of Jesus (showing kingly authority), the Son of God. Just as Jesus is the Anointed King referenced in Psalm 2:6, and which was then confirmed by those same words in verse 2:7, so He is the anointed Priest. The proclamation which says, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You,” had been used to confirm in the Christ both the office of King and High Priest. That the One to fill both of these roles is also Yehovah, and thus God, will be seen in the words of the next verse.

However, even without the words of the next verse, the deity of this One has already been made evident several times in Hebrews so far. We should have no doubts in our theology of the deity of Christ Jesus. When we worship Him, we are worshipping God.

Life application: The author is using words, carefully selected from the Old Testament, to build His case in the superiority of the New Covenant faith in Jesus over the Old Covenant system. He is greater than Moses. He is greater than Aaron. He is greater than the angels. And so on. As the Old anticipated rest for the people of God, and as the Old pointed to faith in Christ Jesus, then the author is directing them to come to Christ, enter into His rest, and enjoy harmonious union with God, through Him, for all time. It is error to deny the deity of Christ, and it is error to fall back on the Law of Moses in hopes of being reconciled to God. There is only one way for this reconciliation to come about, and that is by coming through Jesus, the God/Man who is the anointed King and the anointed High Priest.

Lord God, the Bible makes such a definitive case for the deity of Christ that there is absolutely no excuse for us to deny this most important tenet. If we fail to acknowledge Him in this capacity, we fail to honor You for having come in this capacity. We cannot say that we will follow You, worship You, and adore You without giving that same honor to Jesus. Help us to rightly honor You by honoring the Son. Amen.

As He also says in another *place*:

“You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek”; Hebrews 5:6

The words of this verse are based on the introductory words of the previous verse. There it said, “So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him.” The “He” there is referring to God. After that, the author cited Psalm 2:7. Now, to continue to confirm that Jesus was selected by

God to be High Priest of the New Covenant, he again goes to Scripture by saying, “As *He* also says in another *place*.”

He has done this to confirm that it is God who has selected Christ, and the evidence is already recorded in the word of God. This time, it is in Psalm 110:4. How can we know these words are speaking of Jesus? First, he has already used this same Psalm to show that it is fulfilled in Jesus. This was seen in verse 1:13. He will continue to confirm it in this chapter. Further, He will again refer to the words of this psalm, in detail, in Chapter 7. It is obvious, based on the abundant evidence that he has provided and will continue to provide, that this is speaking of Christ Jesus.

As a reminder that this psalm was always considered as messianic in nature, the opening of the psalm says, “The Lord said to my Lord.” In this, the first use of “Lord” is the divine name, Yehovah. In the second, it is the word *Adonai*. It is a term used when speaking about or to Yehovah, rather than pronouncing His divine name. Both uses are speaking of Yehovah. David is, therefore, making a statement about the Lord appointing Himself to a particular position. In this case, it is the appointment of Jesus the Messiah (who is Yehovah God) to the role of High Priest of a new covenant. This is evident from the words cited by the author which state, “You *are* a priest forever.”

Here it doesn’t say “high priest.” Though He is called this elsewhere in Hebrews, it is not used here in order to make the comparison to Melchizedek, who was never called “high priest.” Christ Jesus would be a priest, executing priestly functions, on behalf of the people and for Yehovah Elohim, or the Lord God. And this priestly role would be “forever.” This is an explicit note of superiority of Christ over Aaron. Aaron was told he would have an everlasting priesthood (meaning during the duration of the Old Covenant), but that priesthood was not in him personally. Rather, it was through him and then his sons after him. In contrast to that, Christ’s ministry would be through Him personally and forever. Therefore, His priesthood is superior to that of Aaron. This will be evaluated and explained in detail in Chapter 7.

The verse then finishes with “According to the order of Melchizedek.” The author now presents Melchizedek’s priesthood as a priesthood comparable to that of Christ Jesus in that it is “forever.” Whether this is literally true or not, or how he can substantiate this, is not the author’s concern yet. That will not come until Chapter 7. He simply makes the statement that it is so. As David recorded it under inspiration from God, it must be a valid premise, and so our author simply states it as an axiom. Melchizedek’s priesthood is forever, and the priesthood of Christ is according to the order of Melchizedek. Therefore, the priesthood of Christ Jesus is forever.

The author could leave the statement here and go no further and have a case for the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over that of Aaron, but he won’t. He will explain the matter in complete detail as he continues. For now, he is simply introducing Melchizedek in order to show that Jesus’ priesthood is worthy of full attention and that it will fully satisfy the mediatorial role of those who come to Him.

Life application: As Jesus’ priesthood is superior to that of Aaron, and as Aaron ministered under the Mosaic Covenant, then what would be the purpose of going back to a priesthood that had continuously failed to bring priest and people to a state of perfection? The sins of the people continued, and year by year they needed a covering for new sins which entered into their lives. The people died, and a new generation sprang up with the same problems. Life could never come about through adherence to this system. Only in Christ Jesus could it be made possible. And yet, there are innumerable people today who are asking their audiences to turn again to Moses and this failed system. Don’t be lulled into this heretical teaching. Come to Christ – the Mediator of a better covenant. (Note: As always “failed system” when referring to the Mosaic Covenant is not because the law itself was a failure, but because sin in man causes it to fail. Fallen man can never be perfected by this system.)

Lord God, we are granted a marvelous opportunity to be freed from the yoke of the Law of Moses by coming to Christ. In Him, we are granted Your grace, and our sins are not counted against us any longer. How precious is the blood of Christ that purifies us once and forever! Let us come to the cross, receive cleansing, and be forever forgiven for our wrongs! Thank You, O God, for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, Hebrews 5:7

The verse begins with “who.” This is speaking of Jesus, not Melchizedek. Though not in the original, some translations insert the name here to ensure clarity. The words now are explanatory of verse 5:2 which spoke of the ability of the high priest to have compassion on those he ministers for. Further, the words are given in preparation for verse 5:8 to show that He “learned” through what is now stated. In essence, it was Jesus “who...learned obedience.” Everything between the words is building up that thought. Understanding this, it next says that it is He who, “in the days of His flesh,” meaning the time of His incarnation.

Christ was born into humanity and He lived out a human existence. The term “flesh” is speaking of this physical aspect of Christ Jesus as a Man. This does not mean that Christ is no longer united to a material body, as if “the days of His flesh are over and He only has a spiritual nature now.” Rather, He is still fully Man, but not in a body like ours. He has an eternal, glorified body. “In the days of His flesh” is speaking of the human nature that we possess, and that He assumed in the incarnation. This is stated to show that He can empathize with us, just as any high priest is able to do.

Next, the author tells us, “when He had offered up prayers and supplications.” The two words are close in meaning, but they cover a full range of what is lifted up. Prayer (*deésis* in Greek) is a strong, even emotional, petition which arises out of a

deep-seated need. It is something personal based on a perceived lack that needs to be filled. Supplication (*hiketéria* in Greek) signifies an olive branch. Thus, it is a type of petition looking for reconciliation and relief. The olive branch is a symbol of seeking peace that we still speak of to this day. This is the only use of the word in the Bible. Christ Jesus is said to have offered these up, meaning to God, “with vehement cries and tears.”

The “vehement cries” does not speak of mourning and tears as if He were downcast. Rather, it is an outcry which arises when one suffers intensely. Examples of this are found in the gospels where it says that Jesus “cried out with a loud voice” in Matthew 27:45, and where He “prayed more earnestly” in Luke 22:44. The “tears” of Christ are specifically noted in Luke 19:41 where He wept over Jerusalem, and where He wept at Lazarus’ tomb. These two examples showed that He, in fact, wept. However, they are probably not what is being referred to here which is speaking of His tears in relation to what lay ahead for Him in regards to His own suffering. When He prayed in Gethsemane, “His sweat became like great drops of blood.” It is hard to imagine that tears were not a part of this moment, even if Luke doesn’t include it in his description. These and other such examples showed the immense depth of emotion and heartfelt petition in His time of deepest need. And these were directed “to Him who was able to save Him from death.”

This is speaking of God the Father, and it can possibly mean one of two things. First, God the Father was able to save Christ from going to death. This is noted in Luke 22:42, for example, where Jesus petitioned, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” It is also possible that it is referring to Christ being saved from out of death. Jesus noted to His disciples that He would be crucified and that He would rise again. But just as He petitioned to be saved from going to death, once it was obvious that this would not come about, His heartfelt utterances to the Father may have been redirected to His being saved out of the state of death. This would be in line with prophecies in the psalms and also in Jonah which reveal this, such as Jonah 2:6 when Jonah prayed from the fish’s belly. In both cases, in going to death, and in being brought out of death, Jesus “was heard because of His godly fear.”

Again, this was actually prophesied in the psalms and in Jonah. In Jonah 2:2 we read –

“Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
And You heard my voice.”

The prophecies were fulfilled in Christ who possessed a godly fear, and who conveyed that in His prayers and supplications to His Father. All of this was not without purpose, but was to fulfill the requirements of becoming a high priest who might “have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray” (5:2).

Life application: The work of Jesus, when taken in its proper light, is more than astonishing. He, who is fully God, was willing to step out of the eternal realm and unite with humanity, taking on all of its pains, sufferings, and trials in order to redeem us; but also in order to become a High Priest who can empathize with our own shortcomings, failings, and weaknesses. Though He never was found in fault, He can empathize with us in our faults. He knows what we are going through and He is not only not unsympathetic to it, but He is minutely aware of it and caring about it. When you petition the Father through Christ Jesus, you are going through One who understands your needs and wants perfectly.

Lord God, because Jesus came in the flesh, He is completely able to empathize with us and to sympathize with our desires, wants, needs, pains, trials, and sufferings. There is nothing unknown to You, and there is nothing He has not – in one way or another – endured with us. Together, we have the perfect match up to respond to us in the perfect way. You know what we need, and You are able to assist us in our times of need. How great are the things You have done for us. Such love! Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Hebrews 5:8

The words of this verse are a part of a single thought presented by the author. Taken together, they read –

“...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”

This verse, then, continues to explain the thought presented in verses 5:1, 2. Jesus was “taken from among men” (5:1), as was seen in the words “in the days of His flesh.” He can also “have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness” (5:2). This is because “He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” With that greater understanding and explanation of those previous verses, we can then correctly evaluate the author’s words. First, he says, “though He was a Son.”

The verb is in the present tense, and so it more correctly says, “Though being a Son.” Jesus didn’t stop being a Son at some point. He was, is, and will always be a Son. Despite this, despite being God’s Son (as indicated in verse 5:5), He was appointed to be a Man, and He was willing to use that manhood to experience everything that man experiences. He did not exempt Himself from those things common to men, but He took them all upon Himself. In this, He could then suffer and learn how to be obedient in His suffering. Here, the author makes this a definite point by placing an article before the word “obedience.” As Young’s literally translates the words –

“through being a Son, did learn by the things which he suffered -- the obedience.”

The thought of Christ learning obedience through His suffering encompasses every aspect of His life, but it finds its fullest sense at the end of His life. Before that came, He learned the obedience of subjecting Himself to His human parents. He learned to physically live under the law which He had given to Israel, having subjected Himself to the same terms and conditions that had established them as a people under the Lord, all the way back at the giving of the law at Sinai. He also learned to be obedient to the authorities placed over Him, both in Israel and in the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire. In these and other things, He experientially learned obedience. However, the ultimate point of all of those things was that He would carry this experiential knowledge with Him even to the obedience of death. As it says in Philippians 2:8 –

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.”

This is “the obedience” that is being referred to in its ultimate sense. In these words from Philippians, Paul uses the adjective form of the noun now used in this verse in Hebrews. Christ Jesus became obedient unto death. As a result, He learned what is truly “the obedience.” Everything that He had lived out in His life was a preparatory step leading to taking that obedient life and offering it up to God as a sacrifice of atonement for the people of God. Thus, in His learning, He can be a merciful, compassionate High Priest. The results and benefits of this are to be explained in the coming verses.

Life application: We are the sum of our experiences. What will we do with that body of experience? What is the most effective use of everything that makes us who we are? The answer, if desiring to please God, is to follow the example of Christ Jesus. He offered Himself, completely and wholly to God the Father, even to death on the cross. Are we willing to be found in the same state of obedience? Are we even willing to give our lives for the sake of Christ if called to do so? Let us contemplate what the Lord has done, and be willing to follow Him down whatever path God sets before us.

Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus lived a life of complete obedience, subjecting Himself to the authority of His human parents, to the authority of the Law of Moses, to the authority of the leaders of Israel, and even to the authority of the Roman Empire under which He lived. And in that obedience, He demonstrated the ultimate obedience in giving His life for the sins of Your people. Grant us the same willingness to use our lives in an obedient manner, going where You direct, even to death itself if need be, in order to lead others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, Hebrews 5:9

The words, “And having been perfected,” hearken back to verse 2:10 –

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

As noted there, this idea of making perfect does not carry the idea of being made “better,” as if there was a lack in Christ. Rather, it speaks of bringing to completion, or meeting, the goal. Christ suffered, was crucified, and died with the intent of bringing God’s plan of salvation to fruition. In His passion, man sees the very heart of God, and then is asked to willingly respond to that glorious offering. The work of Christ makes Him fully and completely suited to bring those many sons to glory.

There was no moral lack in Him, but rather there was a necessity to complete the work set before Him. As fully God, He lacks nothing; but as fully Man, He grew, learned, developed, and matured in every way that other men do. He, unlike Adam though, was fully obedient to the Father and He was found with no fault in His person. Adam was tainted by his own sin and all who follow after him have received his fallen state. However, Jesus inherited none of Adam’s sin nature – having been born of a virgin and of God.

Therefore, His test as a Man was no different than the life of Adam. By passing the test and never sinning, He prevailed and assumed the right to be the sin-bearer on behalf of all men who, by faith, move from the line of Adam to the line of Christ. His perfection was not lacking at His birth or anytime in His development, but rather “made perfect” is alluding to the state which continued to exist from His birth even to His death.

As an example, think of a tree waiting to be used as lumber. The wood always exists in the tree, but it is complete and ready when it reaches the determined size. Jesus’ perfection of person was never lacking, but his test was complete when He had reached His goal for satisfaction of the law; He was “made perfect” at His crucifixion. As Meyer’s NT Commentary states, He was “formally and manifestly accredited by God as such.” By satisfactorily meeting all that was predetermined for Him by the Father, He prevailed over sin and death. Now all who obey Him can obtain eternal salvation through Him. We move from Adam to Jesus, never to be condemned again. This is evidenced in the words, “He became the author of eternal salvation.” Though getting ahead in the epistle, this thought is reflected in the words of verse 7:25 –

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them,”

This salvation is one of whom Christ is the Author (as is also noted in Hebrews 12:2). It is He who gave the terms of the Old Covenant to Israel. It is He who fulfilled those same words, thus annulling it in those who come to Him, and it is He who authored the terms of the New Covenant. Christ Jesus authored every step of the process in the plan in order to bring about “eternal salvation” for those who trust in Him.

To be saved “to the uttermost” is equivalent to “eternal salvation.” This term is explained by John Gill with the words, “...it was resolved upon from eternity, and contrived in it; it was secured in the everlasting covenant, in which not only a Saviour was provided, but blessings both of grace and glory: and it is to eternity; and stands distinguished from a temporal salvation, and is opposed to eternal

damnation; it is the salvation of the soul, which is immortal; and it takes in both grace and glory, which are of a durable nature; and the continuance of it is owing to the abiding and lasting virtue of Christ's person, blood, and righteousness." Vincent's Word Studies agrees by saying of this phrase that it is "a salvation of which all the conditions, attainments, privileges, and rewards transcend the conditions and limitations of time."

What Christ Jesus has done is thus eternal in every aspect, and it is made available "to all who obey Him." This idea follows immediately upon what was said in verse 5:8. As it says there, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." As Christ was obedient, now He offers this eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The way to become obedient is not through works, but it is through faith in His works. That was the point of Christ's suffering. The words of John 6:29 explain what obedience to Him means –

"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

Jesus wasn't saying, "OK, now I will fulfill the law in order to show you what works you need to do to also fulfill the law." Rather, the gospel shows that He has fulfilled it. He has offered something new, and we are to trust in what He has done, and to rest in His accomplished works. This is obedience to Christ.

Life application: Jesus did not come to be the author of temporal or temporary salvation. Nor did He come to offer eternal insecurity to His people. Rather, He came to procure eternal salvation for them, guaranteeing them the promise of eternal life through His fully sufficient and fully effectual work. Do not believe anyone who says you can "lose your salvation" by failing to do this or that. If you have believed in the One whom God has sent, meaning Christ Jesus, you are saved. Read Romans 10:9, 10, and then ask yourself if you have done what it says there. If so, you are saved – once and forever.

Lord God, how absolutely glorious is Your promise of eternal salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus! Now, by faith in Him and His work, we are eternally secure and free from condemnation. All glory, honor, and majesty belong to You, O God! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

...called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”

Hebrews 5:10

This verse completes the thought of the previous two verses. The words, “called of God,” signify being “addressed.” The Greek word, from which they are translated, is a unique compound word signifying “towards” and “to speak in an assembly.” In other words, “to be called by name.” Thus, Jesus is “addressed by God as High Priest.” What has happened here is that the quote of the psalm from verse 5:6 is being restated by adding the word “High” to “Priest.” Putting the verses side by side will show this –

“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek”;

&

...called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”

The importance of the Melchizedek connection isn't explained by the author here and it really doesn't come until Chapter 7. Instead, the author will spend the rest of Chapter 5, and all of Chapter 6, addressing the surety of the hope which believers possess because of the work accomplished by Jesus, who is here designated as High Priest. The entire section may, at first, seem like an odd diversion away from this thought, but it isn't. Instead, he will demonstrate the immutability of God's promises which hinge on the fact that Christ Jesus is a suitable, competent, and eternal High Priest. In verse 6:20, Melchizedek will be reintroduced and, starting in verse 7:1, the significance of his office will then begin to be explained.

By having introduced Melchizedek here though, the author brings to mind the eternity of his priesthood as stated in the Psalms. The importance of this eternal priesthood is to assure the wary believer that if the priesthood is eternal, then so is the salvation – the two go hand in hand. Remember who is being addressed in the original letter – first century Jews who were considering going back to the temple rituals.

These rituals contained continual sacrifices of animals performed by priests who would grow old and die. Even the temple itself was a temporary structure requiring maintenance and which had, at the time of this letter, already been destroyed once. The only thing eternal about the temple rituals was the Object of the worship and petition – God. However, everything else was temporary and identified with a temporary covering. In other words, sacrifices were ongoing and the Day of Atonement came around each year. If it was an eternal atonement, it would have been a one-time event.

This is the importance of Jesus' priesthood being an eternal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. When chapter 7 arrives, it will become much clearer. Until then, it needs to be understood that salvation – because of Jesus' learning, obedience, and suffering – is eternal.

Life application: Everything about Jesus' work is sufficient for all time. He lived one life under the law to fulfill the law. The law is fulfilled in Him forever. He died on the cross of Calvary as a one-time, final, and fully-sufficient atoning sacrifice for all people. He is appointed High Priest once and forever to minister for the people and to God. And so on. Nothing is deficient in the work of Christ. In Him, we have an absolute assurance that everything needed to keep us secure before God has been realized.

One time for all eternity Christ came and suffered on our behalf.

His life in exchange for ours – what an awesome trade!

Now we have comfort from His rod and His staff.

And in this life our salvation is eternally made.

Glory to You, O God, for Jesus Christ our Lord. Hallelujah, and Amen!

...of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. Hebrews 5:11

The author continues with the thought of the previous verse. Taken together, they read –

“...called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.”

Understanding this, he begins the verse with, “of whom.” This translation leaves an unnecessary ambiguity in it. Who is “whom” referring to? Is it Jesus or Melchizedek? Rather, it should rightly be translated as, “of which.” He is not speaking specifically about either Jesus or Melchizedek, but about Jesus’ position and duties as High Priest in comparison to those of Melchizedek. As it says, “according to the order of Melchizedek.” It is of this matter that he then says, “we have much to say.”

He is speaking of himself, but he uses the plural “we” as a way of signifying that there is much to be said and much to be absorbed by his hearers. The word “we” is used in a manner inclusive of them, as if a dialogue between the author and the hearer is expected. However, he then says, “and hard to explain.” The word used is found only here in Scripture and it is rightly translated as “explain.” It is a compound word signifying, “difficult to interpret.” What he has to say about Melchizedek is not a light theological matter, but it is something that even his Hebrew audience will find complicated. This is because its complexity transcends the standard thoughts that had been gleaned about Melchizedek and how they point to Christ Jesus.

In other words, the passage concerning Melchizedek in Genesis is only three verses long, and it is seemingly placed there without any theological reason. Instead, it seems to be a short historical record only. However, David then shows that this is not the case in Psalm 110 (which the author of Hebrews has cited in verse 5:6 and 5:10). David referred to “the order of Melchizedek.” However, he didn’t explain what that meant. He simply made the reference and moved on.

The author of Hebrews now says that what David was referring to implied a concept which is quite complicated, and it will require careful explanation. However, there is a problem. The careful explanation of the deeper theology involved in the statement about Melchizedek will be difficult to explain to his audience because, as he says, “you have become dull of hearing.”

Here he introduces a word which will only be used one more time, in verse 6:12. It signifies “blunt,” “dull,” “lazy,” “spiritually sluggish,” etc. His audience should be able to grasp the more complicated doctrines of the faith, but they instead wallowed in shallow theology and were not ready for being introduced to concepts which required study and contemplation. For this reason, he will now divert away from the subject of Melchizedek, only reintroducing him in verse 6:20.

Life application: What importance is complicated theology to you? Are you content with simply knowing the basics of the faith? When you go to work, are you interested in only knowing the basics of your job, or do you seek out knowing everything associated with what you do? What about your favorite hobby or passion? Suppose you enjoy sports? Do you want to know more than just the basics, or are you content to just sit and watch the events of the game happen, without really knowing why they are happening? The level of interest in everything we do shows us how important each thing is to us. If your knowledge of theology is minimal, it is probably because you consider the subject less important than other things. And yet, it is the most important subject that we could ever touch upon. But sound theology is also hard work. Are you willing to put forth the effort and grow in your understanding of the things of God? With every new understanding of this matter, you show God that knowing Him is important to you.

O God! How absolutely amazing is the story of Jesus! When we contemplate what You have done on our behalf through Him, how can we do anything but praise Your glory? We're free from sin, death, and condemnation through Him. And even more, we're called Your sons and His brothers. How unworthy we are of this highest honor. Praise be to You. Amen.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. Hebrews 5:12

The verse begins with “For” in order to build upon the previous words which said, “...since you have become dull of hearing.” Due to their lethargy in paying heed to the things of God, they had failed to mature. And so as a rebuke of their shoddiness in attending to their theological knowledge, he says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers...” In other words, “Because of the amount of time you have been around, you should be so familiar with the matters we have been discussing that you yourselves should have a deep enough understanding of them that you should be teaching them.” But instead, he continues, “you need someone to teach you again the first principles.”

Actually, the word, “Again,” is in the emphatic position. And so it should be connected to “you need,” not “to teach you.” Therefore, it should read, “You need, again, *someone* to teach you the first principles.” He is stressing the absolute dull nature of their spiritual walk. Not only were they not teachers, but they were so lacking in paying heed to the things of God, that once again they needed to be taught the very basics (first principles).

Just what these “first principles” are is debated. Some look at them as being explained in verse 6:1, speaking of the “elementary *principles* of Christ.” Others, however, see them as the basics of the Old Testament Scriptures which point to Christ. As his discussion so far has been of how the Old points to the New, the latter is likely the case. The same Greek term, *stoicheion*, is used by Paul when

speaking of the Old Testament rudiments in Galatians 4:3 & 4:9, and in Colossians 2:8 & 2:20. In all of these cases, Paul shows the lesser nature of these elements (first principles) in relation to the surpassing knowledge of the work of Christ. In Galatians 4:9, he even calls them “weak and beggarly.” It is a term similar to what the author will call the Law of Moses in Hebrews 7:18.

As we can see, so far and in particular, he has been speaking of the duties of the high priest of Israel and then those of Jesus being on a different order, that of Melchizedek. And so surely he is referring to these “first principles” as the body of Old Testament writing. This is more certain because they are fully termed by the author, “the first principles of the oracles of God.”

The term, “oracles,” is used in Acts 7:38, Romans 3:2, and 1 Peter 4:11. In the first two instances, it is referring only to the body of Old Testament Scriptures, inclusive of the law, the writings, and the prophets. In 1 Peter 4:11, Peter uses the term as a comparison to the utterances of God, but he most fully is referring to the body of Scripture known as the Old Testament, along with any prophetic revelation since then. When the author comes to the elementary principles of Christ in verse 6:1, he will be using the term in how those things are established in Christ as the fulfillment of these Old Testament oracles. This then seems the likely interpretation based on the next words of this verse, and how they tie into the final two verses of the chapter.

Understanding this, the author continues his rebuke of his audience with the words, “and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” The words, “and you have come,” shows a change in the audience. They were in one state and progressing well in it, and then they moved to another state and are now reduced to a lower level; there is a degeneracy in their theology. The obvious explanation is that they had been progressing in applying, to their lives, the knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures and how they pointed to Christ. However, the believing Hebrews had suddenly gone off course and started to look at the Old Testament Scriptures again as a means to an end in and of themselves. It is thus representative of Paul’s words to the Galatians, rebuking them for going back from sound theological development in Christ and turning again to the Old Testament

by adhering to the Law of Moses. This is confirmed in the term, “you have come to need milk and not solid food.”

Milk is for babies, not adults. One must develop from one to the other. Once developed, it would make no sense to fall back to the lesser category. It is reflective of Paul’s words to the Corinthians –

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal.” 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

The author is equating the first principles of the oracles of God, meaning the truths of the Old Testament in how they point to Christ, to mere milk. He is then showing that the deeper theology which is found in Christ is the true solid food which those who are mature will dine on. However, as noted above, they had regressed in their theology by once again applying Old Testament theology to their lives. They had gone from faith alone in Christ to adherence to law. The coming two verses will more fully reveal this.

Life application: The book of Hebrews, like the letters of Paul, warns against devolving in one’s theology from the supremacy of trusting in the finished work of Christ to instead going back to adherence to the Old Testament. Unfortunately, this same problem, warned against over 2000 years ago, has greatly increased in the world again today. Those who follow the Hebrew Roots Movement are doing exactly what is warned against in Hebrews. The author will continue to explain this, in great detail, in the chapters ahead.

Lord God! How blessed are we to have the full revelation of Your plan of redemption in the pages of Scripture. We have what the ancients longed for. In the coming of Jesus, the first principles of theology found in the Old Testament are fulfilled. Now, we can move onto solid food by understanding what He has done. May we pursue the beauty of the finished work of Christ all our days! And to You, we shall give all of our praise. Amen.

For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. Hebrews 5:13

In the previous verse, the author said to his audience that “you have come to need milk and not solid food.” Building on that now, he says, “For everyone who partakes *only* of milk...” He said that they needed milk and not solid food, and now he says that there is a consequence of partaking only in milk. As noted in the content of verse 5:12, the “milk” being referred to is instruction on how the law only points to Christ. There were, for example, feast days, sabbaths, and the like. Each was a shadow, but the substance is found in Christ. Indeed, all of the Old Testament Scriptures merely pointed to Christ as Jesus said in John 5:39, 40 –

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

What the audience of Hebrews was doing was falling back on the Law of Moses in observing the things required there (such as feast days, temple rites, or whatever) instead of simply trusting in Jesus’ fulfillment of these things. This does not mean they were not true believers, saved by Christ, but that they had reverted to the milk of the Old Testament instead of the meat of the New. The author says of this that such a one who does this “is unskilled in the word of righteousness.”

The “word of righteousness” is that of Scripture interpreted through faith. It is a reliance on Christ as the fulfillment of those types and shadows. One who fails to rely on Christ as the fulfillment of them will be unskilled in handling Scripture properly. Paul states this in Romans 1:17 –

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

And again, Paul speaks of this in Romans 9, showing that the Gentiles had progressed to the meat while the Jews had gone back to the milk –

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Why? Because *they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.*”

It is this very same concept which the author of Hebrews is now explaining to his Hebrew audience. Instead of being adult in their theology and dining on the meat found in Christ’s fulfilled work, they had become babes once again. As he says of any such person, “for he is a babe.” Instead of seeing Christ as the Lamb, they went to the temple to sacrifice a lamb. Instead of seeing Christ as the Atonement for sins, they observed the Day of Atonement according to the law, which only pointed to Him. On and on, they had stopped maturing in Christ through faith, and they had gone back to a lesser form of food, mere milk, found in the law.

Life application: What part of the Law of Moses are you secretly holding to? Are you living solely by faith in Christ and giving to your church out of a grateful heart, or are you trying to merit God’s favor by giving tithes to your church according to the law? Are you living out your rest in Christ, or are you observing a Sabbath according to the law? The list of the law’s requirements is long and burdensome. Holding to the fulfillment of them, as is found in Christ, is a light and easy yoke.

The choice is yours. Are you a babe in need of milk, or are you ready for a diet of meat and potatoes?

Lord God – let us not squander the time You have given us, even from the moment we first believed in Jesus. Instead, prompt our hearts onward to an increase in the knowledge of who You are and how You have worked in human history to restore us to You through our Lord Jesus Christ. May You be the one who is glorified as we eagerly pursue You! Amen.

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:14

The word “But” is given as a contrast to what was said in the previous verse –

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

As noted, “the word of righteousness” is that of Scripture interpreted through faith in Christ. It is a reliance on Christ as the fulfillment of those types and shadows found in the Old Testament Scriptures. Those who are unskilled in such things partake of only milk. In other words, they are not living by faith, but are rather relying on those types and shadows as their means of walking properly before the Lord. Unfortunately, one cannot walk properly before the Lord while trying to fulfill that which is already annulled in Christ through His accomplishment of those things.

The author now contrasts such immaturity of partaking only of milk by saying, “solid food belongs to those who are of full age.” The Greek word, translated as “full age,” is *teleios*. It signifies “perfect,” but in the sense of having attained the

proper age. They have “consummated,” as having gone through the necessary stages to reach the end goal of something.

As noted, “solid food” is being equated to “the word of righteousness,” meaning interpreting the word in light of faith in Christ’s work, and all it implies, of the previous verse. Those who are mature will put away things which they can see and actively do in an external way. Instead, they will demonstrate faith in what they have not seen, and they will do it in an internal way. By faith in Christ, we move from being children to being full sons with all the rights and privileges of sonship. Paul explains this, in great detail, in Galatians 3 and 4. In Galatians 4:1-5 he says –

“Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ² but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

There is a maturity in coming to Christ which did not exist in previous times. Those under the law, which only anticipated Christ, are equated to children who are kept by a tutor. The same general analogy is seen here in the contrast between milk and solid food. As he says, “solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

The “good and evil” here is not speaking of that which is morally good or evil, but that which is related to doctrine. Is it sound or is it unsound? Is it wholesome or is it corrupt? It is what Paul refers to in Ephesians 4:14 –

“...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”

As is the case there in Ephesians, the author of Hebrews now is speaking of maturity. The audience is implored to have their senses excited to maturity through a habitual study of God's word. In so doing, it will be seen that Christ is the fulfillment of what was anticipated, and that He is the end of those things for righteousness for everyone who believes in Him.

The dietary restrictions, for example, are a part of the law. Those still affected by such restrictions are considered "weak" by Paul in Romans 14. Again, it is a state of immaturity which is equated to "milk" here. To understand that the dietary restrictions no longer apply in Christ is to move to "solid food," which is equated to maturity. The same theme runs constantly through Paul's epistles using different metaphors. The author of Hebrews is asking his Hebrew audience to grow up, study the word, trust in Christ alone for their spiritual walk, and to put away the weak and beggarly elements (Galatians 4:9) of the law.

Life application: The same theme is used again and again (and again!) in the New Testament epistles in order to wake up those who have come to Christ. Stop relying on yourself! Stop relying on deeds of the law! Trust in Christ, rest in Christ, and exalt God because of the magnificent and perfectly accomplished work of Jesus Christ. This attitude is what is pleasing to God.

O glorious God! Help me to move to spiritual maturity by constantly thinking on, and training myself in, your word so that I may be able to distinguish good from evil, especially in regards to doctrine. By doing so, may my life be a living sacrifice to You and to Your glory. I pray this in the awesome name of Jesus my Lord. Amen!

CHAPTER 6

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, Hebrews 6:1

The word, “Therefore,” begins Chapter 6, asking the reader to consider what was just presented. In verses 5:12, 13 concerning “the first principles of the oracles of God,” he noted that his audience ought to be teachers by now, and yet, they remained “unskilled in the word of righteousness.” They had so far devolved in their thinking that they had abandoned the concept of salvation by grace through faith. They had shunned the truth that this had replaced works of the law, and they had fallen back on observances which only shadowed the coming work of Christ. Now he implores them to get back on the right page and to move ahead in Christ. And so he next says, “leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ.”

The Greek says, “the word of the beginning.” It is not the same word used in verse 5:12, translated as “first principles.” What he is doing is saying that the “first principles” of 5:12 were the replacement of the law with that of a New Covenant built on faith-based righteousness. The law was a mere shadow pointing to Christ. Contained within this New Covenant are teachings that came right at the beginning which anyone should immediately learn concerning this new faith. He calls these “the word of the beginning.” With this understanding, he then goes on to name what this involves by first stating, “let us go on to perfection.” The word signifies “completeness,” as if arriving at the end of a thing. It includes the idea of either moral or mental attainment of a thing.

What he is doing is preparing his reader for understanding the end goal of doctrine concerning faith-based righteousness in Christ. Now, in order to accomplish this, he names the basic doctrines within that system. These are the early truths of the faith, which should come along with faith (which is that upon which all else rests). But he will only name them, not go through any explanation of them. Because they come along with early faith, they are almost a part of it.

Anyone who has believed should know them. When he says, “not laying again the foundation,” he is speaking of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.

The thought then is that, in verse 5:12, he mentioned the “first principles” of the oracles of God. These are those principles which speak of the understanding of the righteousness which comes by faith in Christ. When that is understood and accepted, there are certain doctrines associated with that foundational faith. These will now be listed, but not explained. What would be the point? Now that he has reintroduced to them the purpose of the “first principles of the oracles of God,” they should also remember these other doctrines which follow immediately along with that faith.

And so he says first, “of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.” This is the sum of the “first principles of the oracles of God” mentioned in 5:12. The “dead works” are works of the law which can never save. The “faith toward God” is the understanding that if works cannot save, then faith in Christ to come (and who has, indeed, come) is how righteousness is attained.

Again, the clause, “of the repentance from dead works and faith toward God,” is not a part of the list found in the next verse. Rather, it is the sum thought of the “first principles of the oracles of God.” Along with that faith then come the rudimentary doctrines which any should know and understand.

Life application: Verse 6:1 is a bit confusing, and scholars tend to mix “the first principles of the oracles of God” of verse 5:12 with the “elementary *principles* of Christ” together as if they are speaking of the same thing. Once it is understood that they are different things, the author’s intent clears up. In the end, the important thing is to understand that a person is not saved – in any way, shape, or form – by works of the law. They are saved by grace through faith. That is the foundation. From there we begin to grow (hopefully) in doctrine until we come to the consummation of knowledge concerning the magnitude of what God has done for us in the Person and work of Christ.

Lord Jesus – Your word implores us to move on from basic teachings to those things which are deeper and which lead us to a fuller understanding of You, Your plan for us, and the glory displayed in this plan. Give us wisdom to use our time rightly so that we will have our priorities properly laid out in order to achieve this goal. Thank You for Your guidance in this petition. Amen.

...of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. Hebrews 6:2

From the idea of the foundation, which is repentance from dead work and faith toward God of the previous verse, the author now moves into that “of the doctrine of baptisms.” Here the regular verb, “baptize,” is not used. Instead, it is a plural noun, “baptisms.” It is found in this plural form elsewhere, but only in Mark 7:4 & 7:8 and also in Hebrews 9:10. The noun form in the singular is found in Colossians 2:12. Because of the rarity of the word, and its use in the plural, it is highly debated what is being referred to. However, understanding the audience, and the surrounding context, makes it clear.

First, the audience is the Hebrew people. Secondly, the context is a post-resurrection scenario. This is evident from the previous verse which refers to faith towards God, meaning in the completed work of Christ. It is also evident from the contents of this verse which speaks of the resurrection. It would make no sense for the author to speak of such things before and after mentioning baptisms, and then speak of something which was solely referring to Jewish traditions during the time of the law.

Therefore, the “doctrine of baptisms” may still be referring to baptisms which the Hebrews had encountered under the law – rituals for purification known as the *mikveh*, and the washing of items, hands, and the like – all of which are no longer applicable. It may further be referring to the baptisms which were mentioned in the gospels – that of John’s baptism of repentance, and Christ’s baptism by fire. And thirdly, it could include referring to the baptism of water as a symbol of what

Christ has done, and which includes the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the “doctrine of baptisms,” is an all-inclusive statement about what applies and what does not.

Those washings under the old no longer apply. They were external rites which only looked to the purification found in Christ. The baptism of John was one of repentance, and which was to lead to Christ as well, preparing the people for His work (see Acts 1:5, 11:16; & 19:4). Then, there is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (the “fire” that John spoke of) which comes upon faith in Christ. And finally, there is the baptism of water as an outward profession of the faith professed in Christ (Matthew 28:19).

This then would be the “doctrine of baptisms.” It is an instruction which comes at an early stage of one’s Christian walk, and it is 1) to show the contrast between the Old and the New Covenant symbolism, 2) to explain what occurs in the believer concerning the Holy Spirit; and 3) to show the command of the Lord for those who have so received the Holy Spirit to make the outward profession through water baptism. It is then in line with the command of the Lord to participate in the Lord’s Supper. Those two ordinances were given for those who are a part of the body, and they are commemorative, not salvific, in nature.

After this, the author mentions the doctrine “of laying on of hands.” There are three different uses for the laying on of hands as this Hebrew audience would understand it. First is for healing. That is noted in Acts 9:17 & 28:8. The next is the ordaining of someone to a particular office, such as in 1 Timothy 4:14. The third is that of for imparting gifts of the Spirit, such as in Acts 8 & 19. There were laying on of hands for various reasons in the Old Covenant, and this Hebrew audience had been instructed on what the difference between the Old and the New now was. It should be noted that the laying on of hands was (and is) not a guarantee of either healing or the imparting of gifts. There are instances where associates of the apostles were not healed. Further, gifts are given in accord with the wisdom of God, not on any claim by man. Therefore, these layings on of hands are as much a petition for God’s attention as they are for the imparting that may occur.

The author then moves to the doctrine “of the resurrection from the dead.” Different sects of Jews under the old system believed differently about the resurrection. For example, the Sadducees said there was no resurrection. In order to ensure that those in Christ knew what it meant to be “in Christ,” the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead would have been carefully laid out. What would happen to those saints before the coming of Christ? What would happen to those who died in Christ, or those who did not accept Christ? What would happen to those who were alive when Christ returned? Each of these was something that would have been explained to this audience right at the beginning. They are basic tenets of doctrine, and each was answered concerning the resurrection in relation to Christ Jesus.

Within the same general framework of the resurrection from the dead would have been the final area of doctrine, that “of eternal judgment.” Those under the Old Covenant had ideas about judgment which stemmed from the writings of the prophets. For example, Daniel 12:2 speaks of the resurrection and of judgment. Such examples were incomplete in what they taught because there was no understanding of Christ’s coming, followed by His ascension, and then a second coming. Further, there is still the issue of the millennial kingdom which had not yet come in. All of these things had to be explained to understand the timeline of what would occur, and how the various categories of people would fit into God’s judgment on humanity.

But more specifically concerning the word “eternal,” Vincent’s Word Studies says, “...eternal certainly cannot here signify everlasting. It expresses rather a judgment which shall transcend all temporal judgments; which shall be conducted on principles different from those of earthly tribunals, and the decisions of which shall be according to the standards of the economy of a world beyond time.” This appears both logical and correct. The doctrine of future judgment is a core tenet of what the young believer was instructed on, as well as the understanding that it is a judgment which is based on God’s eternal standards.

Life application: The doctrines mentioned in this verse are basic doctrines which each young believer should be aware of and feel secure in. Though there are debates about the nuances of these doctrines, there should be an understanding

that the practices in the New Covenant are not always the same as those under the Old. To reapply Old Testament practices to our time, after Christ's fulfillment of the Old Covenant, can only lead to unsound ideas about these core doctrines.

Lord, help us to follow Your word alone and not the "traditions of men" when teaching and receiving instruction. And help us to keep our doctrine in proper context, not mixing Old and New Covenants, which can only diminish the glory of what Christ has done for us. May our doctrine be pure so that at Your coming we will be found acceptable in what our lips have uttered. To Your glory alone O God! Amen!

And this we will do if God permits. Hebrews 6:3

After naming the basic doctrines closely associated with "the foundation" noted in verse 6:1, the author now says, "And this we will do." Here he is referring to 1) "leaving the discussion of elementary principles of Christ," and 2) going "on to perfection." These combined thoughts are found in verse 6:1. It is the author's hope that his note has spurred on in his audience the reminder that Christ has come, that they are no longer bound to the "dead works of the law," and that they are to demonstrate "faith toward God" as related to the finished work of Jesus. In this, it should be enough of a reminder to them about the elementary principles which are listed in verse 6:2. With this reminder, they should then be able to assimilate the higher principles related to Christ's work. But, the author then adds in a caveat by saying, "if God permits."

This is a recurring theme. In Acts 18:21, 1 Corinthians 16:7, and James 4:15, the same type of idea is brought forth. In this case, it is not a note that God would be unwilling for the audience to so progress, but that they are dependent on Him for it to occur. God has a plan which is set in motion and that plan will take precedence over all else. He will never work contrary to that set plan, even when it involves things that we think are reasonably proper along the way. The truth of

this will be seen in the coming verses and how what is said there has been played out in the history of the Jewish people.

Life application: The author is writing to the Hebrews, and he is in anticipation of teaching them deeper truths concerning the Person and work of Christ Jesus. And yet, despite writing on such an obviously necessary thing, he includes the words, "if God permits." There may be a reason why this type of information is not properly assimilated and accepted by his audience. If he is this willing to include God's purposes in his statement in this manner, how much more should we be willing to include God in all of our anticipated moves in life? There shouldn't be a time that we say, "I've got this, and it will come out as I intend." Rather, we should rely on the Lord's hand in being with us through the entire process, petitioning Him to effect His will first and foremost.

Lord God, help us to remember to always include You in our plans. In doing so, what we do is surely going to be according to Your will. May our every step each day be pleasing to You! In all things, may You be the one glorified through the lives we lead! Amen.

For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, Hebrews 6:4

To understand what is stated here, the context must be considered. The letter is written to Hebrew Christians, not to the Gentile-led church. The letters of Paul which are prescriptive for the dispensation of grace are found from Romans to Philemon. Secondly, the temple was standing at the time of the letter to the Hebrews as can be determined from other verses within the letter. Thirdly, the layout of the Bible reveals that by placing Hebrews where it is, it is actually also specifically directed to the Hebrews of the end-times, after the church age. The letters of Hebrews, James, and Peter all come after Paul's letters, and are all specifically directed to end times Jews. The study is long, but when seen laid out, it does become clear. With this understanding, the words of this verse are not

directed to the Gentile-led church age, nor to individual salvation. Paul's letters clearly and definitively show that one cannot lose his salvation. As nothing in Scripture contradicts another passage, then the context must be understood to show what is being relayed. With this knowledge at hand, the words can then be properly evaluated.

"For *it is* impossible." The words themselves call to mind the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:26, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." However, some things are, in fact, impossible with God. He cannot violate one of His own attributes. He is righteous and He cannot, therefore, commit unrighteousness. Such is the case with all of His attributes. What Jesus was referring to were things which are not logically or morally impossible for God. Such is the case with spiritual matters like salvation. Man cannot save himself through his own merits, but man can be saved through the merits of Christ.

"...for those." The words are not in the singular, but are rather in the plural, "those." This will continue throughout the next three verses. It is speaking about a collective whole.

"...who were once enlightened." This is a metaphor which is used in Hebrews 10:32 where it is again in the plural. There it applies in a general manner to all who are addressed. Here it is speaking of a certain group who have been enlightened. From this, the words will explain what that enlightenment means.

"...and having tasted." To "taste" something in Scripture is to experience or understand that thing. In Hebrews 2:9, Jesus "tasted" death for everyone. He experienced death, but it was also something that was, at least in the case of believers, something that could be tasted vicariously. Some will never taste death because He died on our behalf (see 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"...the heavenly gift." There is a parallelism with the words here, and the words of chapter 2. In verse 3, it speaks of salvation (tasted); and in verse 4, it speaks of gifts of the Holy Spirit (the heavenly gift). The heavenly gifts, those of the Holy

Spirit, are the proof of salvation. These were imparted to the Jews of Acts 2. In verse 2:38, Peter, while speaking to the Jews of Israel (not the Gentile-led church) promised that they would likewise receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus. This is something that occurred differently (in order and in requirement) in Acts 8 with the Samaritans, and again in Acts 10 with the Gentiles in Caesarea. The author of Hebrews is writing to this same group of people, the Hebrews, to instruct them in how to properly understand what reception of this gift then means to them as a collective group.

“...and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.” They (the collective whole, but not necessarily every one of them) tasted of the gifts of the Spirit because they had partaken of the Holy Spirit. Those who so tasted can only mean true believers. When we partake of something, we participate in that thing. The Holy Spirit is the Gift, and the Gift itself is what bears the heavenly quality.

This is the state of things so far in the first of these three rather complicated verses. “Those who have tasted the heavenly gift” are those who *have understood* the message which they heard – whether they collectively accepted it or not. They have, in their mind, all the knowledge sufficient to be saved through the work of Jesus Christ. Theirs is no longer a problem with comprehending the message, but the collective heart hasn’t been touched – something which must occur.

Those “who have shared in the Holy Spirit” are those who *have seen* the effective power of God displayed in the lives of the converted among them. They may have personally witnessed the miracles and power of Jesus and/or the apostles, or they may have seen the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in the conversion of another – they “have shared in” this experience. This *does not necessarily mean* that all of those in this collective have received the Holy Spirit personally.

Life application: When reading the Bible, it is good to pay attention to the context. Who is being addressed? Under what circumstances are the words being written? Are the words speaking about individuals or a group of people? Does the verse stand alone, or is it a part of a greater whole? Keeping things in context is a great way of keeping you from forming a pretext. Stop, think, read commentaries by

sound theologians, and ask the Lord to direct you as you consider what is being said.

Heavenly Father, how wonderful it is to have shared in the gift of the Holy Spirit. By faith in Christ, and what He has done, we are granted Him as the guarantee of our redemption. In You, a guarantee is more than just words. It is an absolute assurance that will never be walked back on. Thank You for the surety we possess, even when we fall short in our walk toward glory. Amen.

...and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,
Hebrews 6:5

The author now continues his same line of thought which began in verse 6:4. He begins with “...and have tasted the good word of God.” Again, to taste is to experience. The good word of God is the gospel message of Jesus, the Messiah of the Hebrews (who are the recipients of this epistle), and all of the sound doctrine which pertains to this word. It is an acceptance of the truth of Jesus the Messiah as Scripture testifies to.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The language here speaks of the Hebrew people having tasted this good word of God. First, while the temple was still standing, the Jews had this taste and yet, as a people, they were adamantly remaining under the sacrificial system of temple worship. In the first century, these people had both the Old Testament and any word which was then in circulation – either orally or written – which confirmed Jesus’ ministry and spoke of how the Old was fulfilled in the New. By *hearing and understanding* this word, they could taste and understand its goodness. Adding in the demonstrable proofs of the apostles which testified to the fulfillment of their Scriptures in Jesus, they had surely tasted the good word of God.

Similarly, in the future, another temple will be built. When that comes, will the nation wholly return to the temple worship, or will they hear the voice of the two witnesses and of the 144,000 who are chosen to direct them to their long-missed Messiah?

“...and the powers of the age to come.” The wording here is different than in Hebrews 2:5, though some translations make them the same in the English by saying “the world to come.” Hebrews 2:5 speaks of the inhabited world; here it is speaking of a cycle of time, and thus an age. In the end, they both look forward to the same thing: a taste of which was given to the Hebrews at Pentecost, and which will also be the case after the rapture of the church, and during and after the tribulation period. There will be notable gifts of the Spirit then as there was at the beginning.

Charles Ellicott states, they “were as truly anticipations of a future age of glory as was the ‘heavenly gift’ an anticipation of the ‘heavenly fatherland.’” These Hebrews had experienced these “powers of the age to come.” These powers most especially indicate the promised time when Jesus will return to rule the nations and “He will rule them with an iron scepter...” (Revelation 2:27).

The Jewish people had seen or heard of this power demonstrated *in the resurrection* – the very proof that Jesus is God. These points would have been made known to those who received this letter – that Jesus both fulfilled the role of Messiah and would return again in that capacity at some point in the future. To have an understanding of these wonderful tenets and then to reject them for an inferior system would not only make no sense, but it would also show a complete lack of faith in God’s provision which was provided in the Person and work of Jesus.

Life application: What proofs would make you believe the good news of Jesus Christ? Paul says in 1 Corinthians that “Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.” The Jews were given many signs., and the Bible is filled with wisdom for anyone who is willing to search it out. However, of all of the

documented signs, and of all of the wisdom found there, the reader is still left with one tenet which cannot be done without. That tenet is faith. The reader, or hearer, of the Bible must come to God in faith. Have you simply trusted the word of God and, by faith, received Jesus? This is what God would ask of you. Have faith, believe, and be saved!

Glorious God Almighty, it is remarkable that Jesus claims to be the only way to be reconciled to You. But what is even more incredible is that You have allowed any way at all to be reconciled to You. How marvelous is Your gift of Jesus Christ our Lord. Praise be to You in the highest, O God, for our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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

This verse concludes the lengthy thought that began in verse 6:4. The author now begins with, “if they fall away.” There is no “if” in the Greek. This insert is based on a presupposition that the entire thought is hypothetical, but one which could not be expected to occur in reality. The words say, “and (then, or having) fallen away.” The verb is in the aorist tense. However, though “if” is not included in the thought, it is still, in a sense, a hypothetical postulation.

From verse 6:4 until this point, the author has not said that such a thing has occurred, but he is proposing that it could and then stating what the results would be. In this case, and understanding that, at a specific time, there was a falling away in this proposal being submitted. Despite having tasted and participated in what was offered through the Holy Spirit (through gift and word – the word of God comes through the Holy Spirit as well, just as 2 Peter 1:21 notes), they fell away. However, though the wording is not hypothetical in the sense that there is no “if,” Albert Barnes insightfully notes –

“The word rendered ‘fall away’ means properly ‘to fall near by anyone;’ ‘to fall in with or meet;’ and thus to fall aside from, to swerve or deviate from; and here means undoubtedly to ‘apostatize from,’ and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity, or a going back to a state of Judaism, paganism, or sin. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is material to remark here that the apostle does not say that any true Christian ever had fallen away. He makes a statement of what would occur on the supposition that such a thing should happen – but a statement may be made of what would occur on the supposition that a certain thing should take place, and yet it be morally certain that the event never would happen. It would be easy to suppose what would happen if the ocean should overflow a continent, or if the sun should cease to rise, and still there be entire certainty that such an event never would occur.”

And so, if this were speaking of an individual, it does not necessarily indicate that the person had somehow lost his salvation. However, as noted in 6:4, the entire set of verses is referred to in the plural. This is not speaking of individuals, but of the collective group; the Hebrew people. It is a warning that in the rejection of the Lord, after they had tasted the heavenly gift, and after they had tasted the good word of God, they would be considered as having fallen away. It is the same collective type of thought which occurred earlier in Hebrews where the people failed to believe, and they collectively did not enter into God’s rest.

If it were to occur that this group of people fell away, it would be impossible “to renew them again to repentance.” The “repentance” speaks of turning the mind of the people once again to what they had already turned their minds to. Many in the collective had believed, but eventually, the people as a whole turned from this belief in (or about) Christ. They had been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, etc. To be renewed, in fact, implies that they had once been endowed with this tasting of Christ; some were followers of the Messiah. The verb here for renew is now in the active voice. What this is telling us is that it is impossible for men. However, as seen from Jesus’ words of Matthew 19:26, what is impossible with men is not impossible for God. There can be no contradiction in Scripture, and so this must be considered. Nothing that a man does to renew this group will be possible. But the truth is that nothing any person does can bring a person to salvation in the first place. Apart from God’s specific revelation of Himself, salvation is not possible. God has brought man to salvation through Christ. A man

cannot save himself. The same is true with this verse here concerning Israel. As Vincent's Word Studies notes –

“He merely puts his own hypothetical case, and says that, in the nature of such a case, the ordinary considerations and means which are applied to induce men to embrace the gospel no longer appeal to the subjects supposed. He contemplates nothing beyond such agencies, and asserts that these are powerless because the man has brought himself into a condition where they can no longer exert any power. Whether God will ever reclaim by ways of his own is a point which is not even touched. Destruction of the faculty of spiritual discernment is the natural outcome of deliberate and persistent sin, and the instrument of its punishment.”

It should be noted that Scripture never shuts the door on forgiveness to anyone who repents, nor does it shut the door on Israel as a collective (see Romans 9-11). Therefore, when such a falling away occurs, as long as the condition lasts, a renewal is impossible. The words in no way mean that such a renewal is impossible, but that it cannot occur while the person (or the group) is living under an old economy which has found its fulfillment in Christ (through the New Covenant). As Cambridge notes, “There can, he implies, be no second ‘Second Birth.’ The sternness of the passage is in exact accordance with Hebrews 10:26-29 (comp. 2 Peter 2:20-21); but ‘the impossibility lies merely within the limits of the hypothesis itself.’”

“...since they crucify again.” The Greek, as is translated by the Berean Study Bible, more closely reads, “and then having fallen away-- to restore them again to repentance, crucifying in themselves the Son of God and subjecting Him to open shame.” It does not say, “again,” twice. Rather, it is only used once in relation to “repentance.” As far as the word, “crucify,” the verb is a present participle; and thus, the Berean Study Bible is correct in saying “crucifying.” It has the intent of “crucifying as they are doing.” It does not imply an absolute apostasy, but one which is continuous. The tense of the verbs went from past to present. Such is the case with Israel today. They are “crucifying” the Lord through their rejection of Him.

The temple was standing; a future temple will stand. To observe temple rites, and then to come to Jesus who is the fulfillment of all of those types and shadows; and then to return to the same temple rites which only prefigured Him, would be to reject what God has done in Christ. He died for the sins of the world. Therefore, the cross of Christ is no longer available to them because it no longer has the meaning they once assigned to it.

The author then continues with, "...for themselves." This is a reflexive pronoun, dative, third person, plural. The term should read, "in themselves," or, "to themselves." As Cambridge notes, "This is what is called 'the dative of disadvantage' – 'to their own destruction.'" There is no human remedy for sin forgiveness, and the temple rites which looked forward to Christ are, in fact, a human remedy to this person. Only God can forgive, and that through Christ, who is "... the Son of God." To take this course of action would then lead to the final words of the verses, "...and put Him to open shame." What is the purpose of Christ's cross if one retreats to what only looked forward to that cross? It is a shameful act which would, in turn, bring discredit upon the Lord who voluntarily took on the very sin which the temple rites could not expiate. This is what Israel did. After tasting His goodness, they shunned Him and returned fully to temple worship. To this day, they are looking to re-establish that temple worship once again.

What is seen here is a merely theoretical possibility within the teaching of the church – both of individual salvation, and of the salvation of God's people, Israel, collectively. It is not speaking of God's omnipotence which saved and sealed a person in the first place, and who redeemed Israel and promised that He would never forsake them. God does not make mistakes. It is a lesson of warning. As Cambridge states –

"In the face of sin—above all of deliberate wretchedness—we must remember that 'God is not mocked' (Galatians 6:7), and that our human remedies are then exhausted. On the other hand to close the gate of repentance against any contrite sinner is to contradict all the Gospels and all the Epistles alike, as well as the Law and the Prophets."

In other words, there is no finality revealed in these three verses. Everything in Scripture testifies to the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ which is by grace through faith. The author's warning is that for one to assume that going back to the temple rites will make that person holy (or more holy), or bring them nearer to God, is completely contradictory to the work of Christ itself. Further, the words of the author in verse 9 actually presuppose that this is, in fact, a hypothetical situation which is being spoken of, and thus it is a doctrinal treatise for the church to read and learn from, and for the nation of Israel, as a whole, to do the same. Until they, as a collective whole, come to Christ, they can find no way of being restored to God. Those things of the Old merely looked forward to the New.

Life application: Hebrews 6:4-6 are speaking first and foremost about Israel collectively. It is a statement that they cannot be saved by going to God through temple rites and services. The point of Daniel 9:24-27 (and all prophecy concerning this issue – even from the mouth of the Lord Jesus) is that Israel would try to do this and fail; but in the end, they will realize who Jesus is, they will call out to Him, and they will find collective salvation at that time. And you... have you believed in Jesus but let your heart go astray since then? Return to the Lord, knowing that He will receive you because He has already received you.

O Lord, may those around us who have heard about the glory of Your cross never attempt to replace it with something inferior. Rather, instill in them the knowledge that Calvary is all-sufficient for the atonement of every sin ever committed and that nothing else will do. Amen.

For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;
Hebrews 6:7

The author now adds in a thought to complement what he said in verses 6:4-6 by beginning with, "For." From there he says, "the earth which drinks in the rain." The word "land" instead of "earth" carries the idea more fully. It is probably Deuteronomy 11 that the author was thinking of when he said this –

“...but the land which you cross over to possess *is* a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, ¹² a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God *are* always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”

What the author is doing here is using an agricultural term to make a spiritual application. This is something that occurs at other times in the Bible. He is equating people who hear the word with the land which “drinks in” the rain. When it hasn’t rained in a long time, the ground gets hard and dry. It forms such a crust that heavy rains wash over it as if it is concrete. However, a little bit will be absorbed. As the rains continue to come, the land will drink in the water, just as someone who hears the word of God will drink it in, absorbing it and making it useful. This is why he says, “that often comes upon it.”

The more the word is heard, the more it will be accepted into the mind of the hearer, just as the rains are more accepted as the grounds become slowly saturated with the waters. If a few Jews receive the water, they cannot be fully productive. As the word continues to come, more and more will receive it until they, as a people, are productive in the way that is being spoken of here. As with the previous verses, the author is speaking to the collective group of people. And so here we see a contrast to the words of verse 6:4 concerning those who were “once” enlightened. The waters may have come once, but they washed away, never sinking into the land and allowing it to become productive. This is what the author is warning against. Israel has received the water once in Christ’s coming, but will they allow the water of the gospel, His New Covenant, to sink in?

Understanding his thoughts concerning this, he next says, “and bears herbs.” The word is unique in the Bible, *botané*. One can see where our term “botany” come from. It signifies any vegetation which rises out of the earth, including grass, grains, fodder, and the like. It is this vegetation, which springs forth from the well-watered soil, that is “useful for those by whom it is cultivated.” These words show that, in the reception of the abundant rain, there is nothing lacking on the part of those who work the land. Everything is provided by God.

The author is asking the people to consider his words. They are the land. They are being equated to the land in the same type of manner as Jesus did in Matthew 13:4-23. If they will allow the word to come upon them, they will be brought to a state where it will sink into them and make them productive. In them will be a harvest. In the same manner as the productive land, it will be they who receives “blessing from God.”

Again, the terminology goes back to the Old Testament. God promised to bless the land for the sake of the people in Deuteronomy 7:13 (and elsewhere) when they were right with Him. He is again asking, through the author of Hebrews, that they be right with Him, receive His word, and become useful and productive in His New Covenant. Paul uses this same idea in 1 Corinthians concerning those in the church –

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building.” 1 Corinthians 3:9

As the Gentiles are “God’s field,” so the author here is now asking the Hebrew people, who are also “God’s field,” to receive His word and become useful again. There is a great danger in not doing so, and which will be explained in the words to come.

Life application: It is those who hear the word, apply it to their lives, and bear fruit for the kingdom that will receive “the blessing of God.” If you go to church, read daily devotionals, or feel “religious” in some sense, and yet have never accepted God’s word as authoritative in your life, you will be unable to produce a crop which is useful. All of our actions in life are meant to bring glory to God. It is only by living in this manner that you can expect to receive His blessings. Think on this and apply the teachings of Scripture, that you receive, to your life.

Lord God, may we gratefully receive the life-giving waters you provide. We ask that they produce a rich and abundant crop in our lives, a crop which will be useful to You and which will bring the honor and glory to You that You alone are due. This we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen!

...but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. Hebrews 6:8

This verse is set as a contrast to what was said in the previous verse. That said, "Land that drinks in the rain..."

The rain was likened to the word of God. Although not evident in some translations, which incorrectly show a distinction between the land in the two clauses, the land in this clause drinks in the same rain as in the first clause. This is evident by the words, "but if it." The subject "land" hasn't changed. Despite this, the soil is bad – whether rocky, full of clay, full of sand, etc. – it simply doesn't absorb it. And so it is with people who hear the same word and yet the yield is completely different. This group hears the word and simply rejects it. Like the good land which receives the rain, this land is also explained in the same general manner by Jesus in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:4-23. In this case, the land bears "thorns and briers."

The terminology goes all the way back to Genesis 3. There we read in the curse upon Adam, "Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you" (Genesis 3:18). This land has received the same rain as the previous land. It has received the same care of cultivation as well. And yet it only produces that which came from the curse, thorns and briers. The result of the curse, which came upon man at the very beginning for his disobedience, is produced in the unproductive land and thus it is "rejected and near to being cursed."

What more can be done to such an unproductive piece of land? To spend time on it would be futile. To invest more money and resources on it would be a waste. The result would be a piece of land which is not only unproductive concerning a good harvest, but which would actually be counter-productive by sending forth a bad harvest. There would be just one remedy: Its “end *is* to be burned.” The symbolism of the burned land is found in the words used by Moses in Deuteronomy 29 –

“The whole land *is* brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath.” Deuteronomy 29:23

The context of this verse from Deuteronomy is the curse of the Lord upon Israel. This is explicit before the verse, and it is repeated again after it with these words –

“Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. ²⁸ And the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day.” Deuteronomy 29:27, 28

Understanding this, it is the same audience that Moses was speaking to in Deuteronomy that the author of Hebrews is again speaking to, meaning the Hebrew people. Though any such example is given for the Gentile-led church to learn from, it is the Hebrew people who are the subject of the matter. The people are being warned that they have been given abundant rain, and they have been carefully cultivated, but what they produce will result in what happens to them?

Unfortunately, they produced (as a collective whole) thorns and briars. Because of this, the curses of the covenant did fall on them. They were scattered and destroyed for two thousand years. However, the words of the covenant also promise restoration at some point. That time has begun. The prophets foretold of the time when they would again be in the land and they would be given the

chance to produce a proper harvest. This is why Hebrews is placed after the Gentile-led church age epistles. Though written to the first-century Jews, God knew that they would produce a bad harvest, and be cursed. However, after the church is taken out at the rapture, things will change. The tribulation period will refine them, and they will come out at the end of it by calling on Jesus and acknowledging His New Covenant.

Life application: Though this is addressed to the Hebrew people as a collective whole, those in the Gentile-led church age can learn the same lesson concerning individual salvation. For those who receive the word and produce a good harvest, they will receive their just reward. For those who reject it, a great Day of Judgment is coming. It says in Revelation 20:15, "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Make the right choice today, while you still can. Drink in the water, cultivate your soil properly, and receive blessing from God.

Thank you Jesus that you have given us the chance to bear fruit for You. What we deserve is destruction, but you graciously took our sin and nailed it to the cross, if we will only believe. Help us to make that choice and then to glorify you through changed lives throughout all our days. Amen.

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. Hebrews 6:9

The word, "But," is given to contrast the unhappy end of things mentioned in verse 6:8. There he spoke of the land which bears thorns and briers as being rejected, near to being cursed, and whose end is to be burned. As explained, that was speaking of those who hear the word but are not productive in it. As was seen, it has been speaking about the Hebrew people and their fate as they apply or reject the word of God. He will explain the contrast that he expects in his audience, but first, he begins with "beloved."

In saying beloved, he is speaking now of those who are believers in Christ. He understands that they have professed faith in Him, and the fate of the nation may be one end, but the fate of those who have found faith in Christ may be different. Even if the whole nation walks away and is destroyed, for those in Christ, he says, “we are confident of better things.” In the Greek, there is an article before “better things.” It says, “the better things.” This is then referring to what was said in verse 7 about the land which drinks in water and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, and which receives a blessing. As he says, “the better things concerning you.”

They have come to Christ, and he knows that their end is one of blessing. This is so certain that he continues, “yes, things that accompany salvation.” He is writing to a Hebrew audience, he has addressed them as “beloved,” and he understands that they have faith in the Messiah. Again, the fate of Israel may be that of a curse, and indeed it turned out to be so. However, for those who received the word and applied it to their lives in faith concerning Messiah, the better things which accompany salvation are their happy lot. The things they do, in Christ, are considered acceptable works because of Christ. Thus, those things “accompany salvation.” To show that he understands this, and that he wants them to see the difference between the two, he finishes with, “though we speak in this manner.”

He has told of a scary fate that may lay ahead for the collective whole, but for those who have come to Jesus in faith, his words about the curse and destruction do not apply. In Jesus, there is the surety of salvation.

The words here are not at all speaking of these people turning away in apostasy and losing their salvation. Rather, they are showing a distinction between two categories of people, within the greater body of Israel, who have chosen (or who will choose) one of two different paths. For those who choose the good path, there is assurance. These very verses, which people confuse with a possible loss of salvation, when looked at properly actually speak of the impossibility of it. By simply hearing the word which tells of Jesus, and then in accepting it, salvation is granted. Paul couldn't be any clearer on this issue –

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

Isn't it wonderful to know that our salvation, after coming to Christ, isn't up to us! When one hears the word of truth and believes (that's it!) he is marked with a seal – the promised Holy Spirit. After that, salvation is no longer up to the individual maintaining a perfect testimony. If it were, every single person – EVER – would be lost again. We all fall, we all sin, and we all fail our Lord. O! But He is ever faithful to keep us from ourselves. Hallelujah and Amen!

Life application: Each individual must decide what they will do with Christ. There may be a congregation that comes together which has heard the word and completely misused it, not coming to Christ in their hearts. But even within such a group, there may be some that choose another path. This then would be similar to what is said in Revelation 3:4, where the congregation at Sardis is said to have some who were worthy, and who would walk with Christ in white – meaning they were saved. Be sure to come to Christ. No matter what church or denomination you belong to, don't follow the crowd if the crowd is heading in the wrong direction.

Glory to God in the highest for His ever-faithful and ever-strong hand of salvation! Lord, we look to You in awe for Your ability to keep us, even from ourselves. Thank You Lord Jesus for the work You accomplished and for the eternal security You provide! Again, glory to God in the highest! Amen.

For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in* that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Hebrews 6:10

The author now turns onto the works-highway for the next three verses. But, it is a “works of faith after salvation,” not a “works for salvation” that he will speak of. His thoughts are in line with all of Scripture which speak of salvation as being by grace through faith. As Paul said –

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”
Ephesians 2:8, 9

With this understanding, he begins with, “For.” This is based on the words of verse 9 which spoke of those things “which accompany salvation.” Their deeds, done in Christ, are deeds which are acceptable to God, and for which they will receive their just reward. As he says, “for God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love.” Some manuscripts leave out the word “labor.” Regardless as to whether it belongs there or not, the labor cannot be that of looking “for salvation,” but rather that which is considered acceptable “in salvation.” As noted in the previous verse, the author’s words clearly speak of those who are saved believers in Christ.

They have produced fruit in their salvation, and God will remember what they have done. One of God’s attributes is that He is just. In His justice, He will not fail to remember what His people have done as deeds of righteousness while in Christ and for the sake of God’s glory. These things are as a “work and a labor of love” worthy of God’s attention because of the love they have, as the author says, “shown toward His name.”

The verb for “have shown” is one which indicates “proof which demonstrates something which is undeniable” (HELPS Word Studies). It is a verb which always occurs in the middle voice in the Greek, and thus it underlines the “high level of personal interest shown by the one making something *very evident*” (HELPS Word

Studies). The work so spoken of here is “toward His name.” In other words, it is undeniable that these are saved believers who have demonstrated faith by displaying works which glorify God. As no works are acceptable before God without the covering of Christ, these are saved believers who are working out their salvation through demonstrations of it.

The author then finishes with, “*in* that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” Their labors involved a careful attention to the needs of the other believers. The types of ministering are not named, but they could be helping financially, hiding believers during times of persecution, feeding them as they passed through on journeys, or whatever other way their needs were evident. These believers who are being addressed extended their faith to helping the other saints and to the glory of God.

Life application: There is no *thing* that we can do to earn God’s favor leading to salvation except to receive Jesus’ work which was accomplished by Him on our behalf. This is because we are, by nature, unholy. Nothing unclean can enter God’s presence. By receiving Christ, we are covered by His blood and are declared righteous in the presence of God. This is in no way intended to mean that we should sit idly by and not accomplish righteous works for His glory. We were bought at a high price – the price of the cross – and therefore should naturally desire to glorify God by helping his people.

What works are acceptable then? Other than a few instances in the New Testament, nothing specific is given, but we can be inventive in our desire to bring glory to God. Ultimately, any deed which will lead sinners to repentance should be considered first. To feed the hungry without introducing the gospel is pointless. The “social gospel” is no gospel at all. When venturing out to do good deeds, the glory of Jesus needs to be included or nothing of lasting value has been accomplished.

Help us, O Lord, to accomplish those deeds which will lead others to know You and to see Your glory. Let our actions never be for our own glory or to exalt a particular ministry. Rather, may our hearts and souls be filled with longing to lead others to the salvation provided by the cross of Jesus. Amen.

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, Hebrews 6:11

The author just spoke of his audience's "labor of love," which was that they had "ministered to the saints." He now says, "And we desire that each of you show the same diligence." It is obvious that he was speaking in general terms in the previous verse. There was a labor of love that was evidenced in the people he is writing to, but that did not necessarily extend to all of the people in the congregation. He is now imploring each to add in his own labors so that all would be a part of this labor of love. He then adds in, "to the full assurance of hope until the end."

The Greek word translated as "full assurance" is used by Paul in Colossians 2:2 concerning a full assurance of understanding. It was then used in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 when speaking of the full assurance of the gospel which was presented by Paul and those with him. It is now used in this verse in Hebrews concerning hope, and it will be used one more time in Hebrews 10:22 concerning faith. It signified "entire confidence." He is admonishing these people to be diligent in their good words so that they won't lose their confidence, not that confidence will be lost in them by the Lord. If someone becomes a sluggard in his attitude toward the Lord, it will inevitably make them question their own assurance of hope.

He is not in any way implying that good works are necessary to continue in salvation. Rather he's stating that if someone fails to show diligence to the end, it is a failing of their walk with the Lord. One who has a failing walk with the Lord is not excluded from His grace, only from rewards for his conduct. Further, and this is usually not the case, it may reflect that the person wasn't saved in the first

place. A large problem among believers is that some people link doing good works with proof of salvation. This leads to high-handedness, and an often arrogant attitude towards people who never do good things for others, or some type of work to promote the goals of the church.

Despite this, it's simply not possible to tell if a person is or isn't saved based on some dubious standard of good deeds. The entire book of 1 Corinthians is written to a group of people who were immature believers, caught up in bad living, etc. There's very little to reflect the notion that these people were saved based on their "works," and yet Paul never questions their salvation – even a person who was engaged in gross immorality. Rather, he firmly held that if these people made a profession of faith and believed in their hearts the gospel message, they were saved. He remained unwavering in this stand and we should have the same attitude.

Life application: To go around questioning the salvation of others shows rather immature behavior in a person. It is God, not us, who judges the hearts and minds of our fellow humans. Instead of attempting to do this then, we need to show diligence in our own works, and attempt by doing so to induce others to accomplish them as well. In the end, though, the necessary task we must accomplish is trusting in Christ and His great deeds. Everything else pales in comparison to that and it is this trust and faith which is the greatest thing we can ever participate in on a personal level. It is this, and this alone, which leads to salvation. Having a diligence in our works after salvation will add a confidence to our walk that otherwise may be lacking.

Lord, let us never be ashamed of the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus' work. Help us to turn from any works-based system which is nothing more than what all false religions have to offer. Instead, the work of Christ alone is what restores us to You. Thank You for this wonderful gift. In Jesus' name we pray! Amen.

...that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:12

The “same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end” which was stated in the preceding verse is now explained by saying, “that you do not become sluggish.” To become sluggish implies a change from one state to another. In this case, it is going from diligence to sluggishness. This word was introduced in verse 5:11 as “dull” as in “dull in hearing.” This is now its last use in the Bible. It signifies being lackadaisical, lazy, and so on. The author is imploring his Hebrew audience to not allow this type of attitude to prevail, but rather to remain diligent. He then explains the rest of the words from 5:11, and which contrast being sluggish in this verse by saying, “but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Some older translations say that they are to be “followers” of those examples. This misses the force of the thought. One can follow without imitating. Rather, we are to emulate them. Further, the Greek of the verb for “inherit” is in the present tense. It should say, “are inheriting.” There is no doubt about their state. They are in the process of inheriting the promises, and the author asks his readers to imitate them as they conduct their lives in Christ with the same diligence. In this, they will remain confident of the hope they possess. They too are inheriting the promises, but to become sluggish in their attitude will cause them to lose the confidence they should possess in this. When one lacks confidence, they become ineffective in the matters in which their confidence is lacking.

Some of those who are referred to in this verse will be explicitly named in Chapter 11, the “Hall of Fame” of the faith. It is those who persevere in faith and good works that will receive the greater blessing on that day. All who have come to saving faith in the Lord’s promises (as are realized in Messiah), the redeemed of the ages, will be there. However, there will certainly be different rewards and many losses based on what we do in this life. But one should never feel that his contribution is insignificant compared to great scholars, evangelists, or theologians. Hebrews 11 will show that whatever is worthy of reward is that which is done in faith. One can be a great Bible scholar, but possess little faith in the Bible. Another can be a janitor with little theological training, and yet he can

possess complete faith in what the Bible proclaims. Which of the two is on the more sure footing?

Life application: Although there is surely a ranking within the gifts which God portions out to His people, it doesn't necessarily mean the reward for exercising a lesser gift will be less than that of exercising a greater gift. If a person who has a greater gift doesn't exercise it, by faith, to his utmost, can he expect greater rewards than someone who cheerfully and humbly exercises his lesser gift in total faith? Each person is given a gift and the ability to exercise it, in faith, to the glory of Christ Jesus. Let us ever strive to do so to the utmost of our ability!

Thank you O God, for the gifts that You have given to us in our Christian walk. Help us to be aware of them, exercise them to our utmost, and to do this in a manner which brings glory to You and not to us. May we never look down on, or in envy of, others as they pursue the exercise of their gifts. Glory to You for how You have dealt with us! Amen.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, Hebrews 6:13

The author will now spend several verses explaining the surety of God's promises to His people. The word, "For," is based first on the thought of verse 6:9 which spoke of the surety of the author concerning the "better things" which "accompany salvation" in his audience. It is then secondly based on the completion of that thought which is found in verse 6:12 concerning those who "inherit the promises." Thus, what will be presented from this verse until the end of the chapter are words confirming that God is trustworthy in accomplishing those things which have been promised. With this understanding, he says, "For when God made a promise to Abraham."

The author mentions Abraham, of whom he will mention ten times in the epistle. The final two times (verses 11:8 and 11:17) are those which speak of the faith of Abraham. He was given promises, and he looked forward to the fulfillment of them, despite the difficulty of being able to see how what was said to him could be of benefit to him in any immediate sense. In other words, Abraham had to simply trust what the Lord was saying was best, and to act upon that word in faith. But Abraham understood that God is God, and the author, knowing that Abraham possessed that firm knowledge, next says, “because He could swear by no one greater.”

Because God is God, there is none before Him, and there is none greater than Him. He is the Source of all other things. Therefore, unlike man who swears upon something greater than himself in order to confirm an oath, God cannot do this. Instead, “He swore by Himself.”

As God created time, space, and matter, everything about Him simply *is*. There is no change in God of any kind – such as growth or progression. He is before all things and all things are held together by Him. He is of infinite worth and His word *is*. In other words, His word is truth in the ultimate sense. At one point in the stream of human history, God chose to speak to one man a promise of blessing that would be to all peoples through his seed. This became known as the Abrahamic covenant.

Like other covenants God has made, they simply *are*. When the promise is made, it can never change and never be added to or subtracted from. Some of the other covenants which are noted in redemptive history are the Edenic (Eden) Covenant; the Adamic (to Adam) Covenant; the Noahic (to Noah) Covenant; the Mosaic (to Moses) Covenant; the Land (particular to the land and people Israel) Covenant; the Davidic (to David) Covenant; and the New Covenant (which came through Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary).

These often came with conditions – such as obedience on the part of the recipient – but some came unconditionally. However, no matter whether conditional or unconditional, when God speaks, He will fulfill His part of the bargain. It is man

who can, and often does, fail to meet his part of the agreement. In the case of the Abrahamic covenant, no conditions were made for man's obedience. God swore a promise that was unbreakable –

I swear by myself, declares the LORD... Genesis 22:16

The author uses this promise to establish an understanding of God's nature and to complete the thought which is coming in the rest of the chapter. Though this passage is citing words from Genesis 22, it is built upon the relationship of promise which began in Genesis 12:3, and which was then expanded on in Genesis 15. The interactions between God and Abraham are given to demonstrate the surety of God's word to His people.

Life application: People often debate the doctrine of eternal salvation, as if it is either an incorrect doctrine, or that there are various situations which will negate it, even if it is "kind of" true. Such discussions fail to consider the nature of God. In understanding that God's word stands, and that it cannot be voided, the issue resolves itself. If God says that salvation is by grace through faith, and that it is procured by faith in Jesus (Romans 10:9, 10), and that, when that faith is exercised, the Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee (Ephesians 1:13, 14), it then becomes impossible that the salvation which is granted could be then be lost. Those who teach that one can lose their salvation do so because they do not understand the nature of God. They believe in a vacillating God who changes His mind, and who makes decisions which are arbitrary and conditional. This is not the God of the Bible. If you struggle with this doctrine, you need to consider God, not your own (or others') failings. In doing so, you need no longer struggle with it. God has spoken the word of salvation. It is based on faith, and it is eternal.

One thing we can do, even in our weakness, O God, is to trust that your promises are true. Your very nature assures us and reassures us that every word spoken by You will come to fruition. For this, we thank You and praise You, O King of the ages. Amen.

...saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”
Hebrews 6:14

The words of this verse are quoted from Genesis 22 –

“By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— **17** blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.” Genesis 22:16, 17

There is one noticeable change in the quote, however, from “your descendants” to “you,” but this is a way of highlighting Abraham’s place in the blessing. By multiplying his descendants, he himself is essentially multiplied as well. The concept of such an idea will be more fully revealed in Chapter 7 when dealing with a tenth of the spoils being given to Melchizedek by Abraham. The author will demonstrate that the tithes given to the Levites in Israel many years later are actually paid “through Abraham” to Melchizedek. In that example, the greatness of Melchizedek is highlighted. Here it is Abraham’s greatness which is highlighted, but because Melchizedek is the one who blesses Abraham, and because “the lesser is blessed by the better” (7:7), we are being shown a logical progression of thought which shows the absolute superiority of the priesthood of Christ over the Aaronic priesthood. Christ’s priesthood is “according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6 & 7:17). The author has not departed from that thought at all, but is carefully making a case that it must be so.

For His own sovereign reasons, God chose Abraham. He knew he was the exact person in that particular place and time who would best suit His plan to 1) preserve the godly line which led to the Messiah, Jesus, and 2) to establish a people that would not only bring in the Messiah, but also who would fulfill His purposes in history in other ways, including Christ’s return to them in the future to reign among them.

It is Abraham who became the father of the Jewish people, but from him descend others who are now a part of the Islamic countries which are found around Israel as well. It was through Isaac that the blessing was reckoned, but Ishmael was also blessed (Genesis 17:10) and became the father of 12 tribes, just as Isaac – through Jacob – became the father of the 12 sons of Israel. In a greater sense though, Abraham has become the father of all the faithful who have been adopted as sons through Jesus (Galatians 4:5 & Ephesians 1:5). It is, therefore, through Jesus that the promise of “many descendants” is truly fulfilled. All nations on earth are blessed through Abraham because of Him. In essence, like all things, the blessing comes from God and is fulfilled by God through Jesus. As it says elsewhere –

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” Romans 11:36

Life application: God initiates all good things, they proceed through Him, and they are for Him. All things are a part of His glorious plan, and in the end, all people will glorify Him for what He has done in human history. In the coming days, great battles and sorrows will come to the sons of Abraham who are sons through the flesh only, and not through the acceptance of Jesus. This time of trouble will result in a world of great distress, but Jesus will return to rule and to weed out all unrighteousness. Until this time of trouble comes though, it is the duty of all Christians to lead the natural sons of Abraham to an understanding of his greatest Son, Jesus. Let us not waiver in our duty.

Lord God, You promised to bless Abraham and give him “many descendants” but no one could have imagined the world full of people – both through the flesh and through adoption – who would become his sons. Just as we have been adopted into the family of faith, help us to teach the natural sons of Abraham about his greatest Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. Hebrews 6:15

The words here must be looked at in the greater picture of what the Bible is revealing. The reason why is because in Hebrews 11:13 we read –

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

The author had been speaking of Abraham receiving an inheritance, something that did not occur during his lifetime. Instead, he remained a pilgrim and a sojourner. The “promise” being referred to here in 6:15 is, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” Abraham and his wife Sarah went many long years without bearing children.

In Genesis 12, at the age of 75, God promised him that He would bless him and make his name great. At God’s word, Abraham set out for the land of Canaan in order to accept what God had promised. In Genesis 15, which was some time later, God appeared again to Abraham and reminded him of the promise. In fact, God cut a covenant with him in a manner which signified the absolute surety of the promise. This is recorded in Genesis 15:9-21. In Genesis 17, God instituted the covenant of circumcision with Abraham and his entire household. This occurred as he was closing in on the age of 100 and his wife was nearing 90. In Genesis 21, the son of promise – Isaac – was born to Abraham at 100. This child came at an age that childbirth was unthinkable; but God was ever-faithful to Abraham and, as this verse says, “after he had patiently endured,” the son came.

This son, Isaac, was to be the one through whom “many descendants” would come. However, in the next chapter – Chapter 22 – God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his own son as an offering of devotion to God. How could the promise of a multiplication of descendants come through Isaac if he was to be sacrificed? The author of Hebrews explains Abraham’s thought processes later, but one thing was sure – Abraham never failed to accept God at His word and he

was ever-patient in waiting on the promise. Because of his faithfulness, Abraham is used to this very day as the model of faith.

For now, it is to be understood that Abraham did, in fact, obtain the promise through Isaac. The promise of a son, from his own body and through that of his wife Sarah, was realized in him. From this, Abraham knew that many descendants would follow because Isaac was the pledge guaranteeing it would be so. Further, the hope of Messiah was realized in Isaac as well. Jesus said as much in John 8:56

—

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

In the birth of Isaac, Abraham surely saw the coming of Messiah and he rejoiced. The promise made at the fall of man would come about. It would come through him, and it would be through the son of promise, Issac. It is in this that “he obtained the promise,” meaning the surety of a multiplication of descendants. The word translated as “obtained” simply means “*obtain* by ‘lighting upon’ (falling in line with), happening upon; *attain* to, because at the right point to ‘*suitably* obtain.’” In other words, the author is stating that Isaac’s birth was the lighting upon what would eventually be fully realized. Further, whether he understood it or not, this vast number would include both physical descendants and those who are adopted into the faith he possessed through their own act of faith (see Galatians 3:29).

Life application: The author is instructing his audience on what was said in verse 6:12 concerning “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” He is showing that Abraham had to wait about 25 years for this aspect of his life (the birth of Isaac) to come about, but wait patiently he did. If your life seems to be at a standstill, remember Abraham who waited such a long time for the promise. God is not slow in keeping his promises. Nor is He inattentive in His care for His people. We simply need to accept His timing and His perfect wisdom in all things.

O God, be with us and remind us of Your faithfulness as we wait upon You. We're bound by time and therefore it's so hard for us to be patient, but this is what Father Abraham was commended for. Help us to receive that same commendation. We can do it with Your gentle reminders that You are there. Thank You, and to Your glory and in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Hebrews 6:16

The word "oath" has an article before it – "the oath." Further, the word "confirmation" is tied in with "end," not "oath." Thus, it more correctly reads, "the oath is the end for confirmation of all controversy."

With this understanding, the verse can be evaluated properly. Here, the author is showing that the oath made by God, which is recorded in verse 6:14, is an absolute and unconditional thing. First, he shows how things work among men by saying, "For men indeed swear by the greater." It is an obvious truth which he brings up. It is something universal to humanity.

Everyone follows this precept. When someone wants to confirm their word, they will make an oath and then swear by something greater than themselves in order to make the oath binding. A citizen of Rome would swear by Caesar. A Hindu may swear by Krishna. A person who was known to have loved his mother may swear by his mother's grave. Someone may swear by their bank account. Whatever it is that is the guarantee for the vow, it is always something of great value to the one swearing and it is a confirmation of their word. Whatever they perceive is the greatest thing to them, that is what their oath is based on.

The idea is that if the word spoken is untrue, then they are binding themselves under that thing – Caesar, Krishna, their dead mother's honor and memory, or the loss of their treasured money. From that precept, "the oath is the end." Once the

oath is made, there is nothing more which can be added to it which will make it any more sure in the ears of the hearer. The Greek word “end” is found three other times in the New Testament, always in the plural and always speaking of the “ends of the earth [or world].” It is the extremity or conclusion. Here, it is in the singular and it means that there is nothing beyond it; the matter is settled. As the author says, “for confirmation of all controversy.”

When there is a question concerning a matter, the oath is given, and any controversy in the matter is, from that point forward, upheld as established and without later addition or change. With this understanding, the author will next explain the absolutely sure nature of what God said when He spoke out His promise to Abraham.

Life application: It is not wrong for Christians to make vows. This is actually implied in Hebrews 6:16. However, it is important for us to first realize that we are not to make vows based on any part of creation. Here are Jesus’ words on the matter – “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33-37). The Christian is to be taken at his word. If people don’t see a person of integrity, they will expect an oath, but Jesus says it is not to be this way. Instead, we are to be wholly trustworthy in our dealings, even without our vows. Having said that, to vow on anything less than the name of the Lord is a form of idolatry. To swear on anything in creation is to then elevate that to one’s supposedly highest value, thus diminishing the name of the Lord. For this reason, the Bible offers this directive – “You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name” (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is not a contradiction of Jesus’ words. Rather, when an oath is required by another then that oath is to be made in the name of the Lord only. Nothing less is acceptable because nothing else is eternal and unchanging.

Oh God, help us to be right and upstanding Christians who are so faithful to You that others will accept our words by a simple "Yes" or "No." If it is necessary because of a legal matter to make an oath, remind us that we are only to do so in Your name. When we place a hand upon the Bible, remind us of the importance of the matter that we are testifying to. Amen.

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, Hebrews 6:17

The author has just spoken of the fact that, in making an oath, all dispute over a matter is ended. Nothing more can be added to that oath which would make any substantial change in the minds of the one hearing the oath. They simply need to accept what is said and go on from there. And that is an oath among mere men. Now the author applies this indisputable truth to God – “Thus God.” In other words, “If this is surely the case among men, how much more sure is it with God.” From there, he says, “determining to show more abundantly.”

What God does should be sufficient, in and of itself, to confirm that it is the work or word of God. However, there may be a reason why God acts in a manner beyond his initial word or work. In such a case, He will take further action in order to show – even more abundantly – that what He communicates is certain. In this case, it is “to the heirs of promise.” Actually, the Greek places an article before “promise.” It says, “to the heirs of the promise.”

The promise of Messiah was made in Genesis 3:15. There are to be heirs of this promise, or there would be no need for a promise. As Abraham already had Ishmael before Isaac, and because Isaac was to be the son of the promise (of the intended messianic blessings), God had chosen at a certain time to “show more abundantly” to these heirs “the immutability of His counsel.”

God speaks and He is to be taken at His word. However, just as men may doubt the oath made by another man (even though they have accepted that man's word as settled because it came from him through an oath), man may also doubt God when He speaks. (Hold on – before you deny this, remember that this is a constant and chronic failing of people in the church today. We incessantly doubt the surety of God's word. We doubt if we are really saved; we doubt if there will really be a rapture; we doubt that God hears our prayers; etc.) And so, in order to not only speak out a word and expect it to be believed, God adds to His initial promise (of Genesis 3:15) in order to show even more abundantly that His counsel is immutable.

Immutable means "unable to change." In the case of God, He simply *is*. There is no learning in God, there is no development of any kind, and in fact, there is not even any potential for it. For example, our prayers don't change God's mind. Rather, He knew our prayers before we prayed them. Does this mean we don't need to pray? On the contrary, if we withhold our prayers, God knew beforehand that no prayer would be offered and thus no response will be forthcoming. From our perspective then, prayers have an effect.

Likewise, the plans and purposes for the redemption of man were known, in their fullness, to God before the creation of the world. Abraham was selected before he ever existed for the covenant particular to him. Nothing could change that. However, from Abraham's perspective, God's oath confirmed His words to him. This oath then showed Abraham (and those who follow him who are of the promise) "more abundantly" the immutability of His word. And how did God do this? He "confirmed it by an oath." That is what the author referred to in verses 6:13, 14 where he said –

"He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.'"

When man makes an oath, regardless if it is true or not, all dispute is ended. When God, who cannot lie, makes an oath, the surety of its accomplishment is fully grounded in who He is. The oath merely confirms His word more abundantly. This is not for His benefit, but for the benefit of His doubting creatures.

As a point of theology, the word “confirmed” here is found only this one time in the Bible. It signifies “to mediate.” As Charles Ellicott explains, “thus confirms His word, at once the Promiser and the Mediator: God the Promiser (if we may so speak) makes appeal to God the Hearer and Witness of the oath.”

The author of Hebrews is introducing this fact now in order to look forward to another promise that God will make, and which will be explained in Chapter 7. What we have in this promise to Abraham from Genesis is the first example of such a sworn oath by God in the Bible. But another will be discussed (Hebrews 7:14) which points directly to the work of Messiah, who is God. Though this passage seems to be a diversion from the thought about Melchizedek in relation to the High Priesthood of Jesus, it is an integral part of that thought. The author is using the promise to Abraham now in order to show the immutability of His word concerning Christ’s priesthood.

Life application: The oath to Abraham was an added bonus to what was already decided by God in Genesis 3:15. Take all of this in the context of your own personal situation now. God has spoken. His word is recorded for us in the pages of the Bible and what He has said simply *is*. There is every assurance that the Bible is the word of God and, therefore, we can completely rest in its promises for us. And so, just as God credited righteousness to Abraham for simply hearing and believing, we can have the exact same blessing from God by simply hearing His word and trusting it.

Yes, Lord God! Thank you for the simplicity of the gospel. Thank You that we don’t need to rely on some dubious and unknowable amount of good deeds in order to be saved, but that we are simply pleasing to You by accepting what You have already done in and through Jesus. What an immense and awesome bargain! Amen.

...that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. Hebrews 6:18

The author now says, “that by two immutable things.” This refers to what he said in the previous verse with the thought that God confirmed his words by an oath. The two things then are 1) His spoken word, and 2) His oath. Both are immutable (unchanging). He then confirms this with, “in which it *is* impossible for God to lie.” As noted previously, He is before all things. Because this is so, He is not bound by the constraints of time. Everything about Him simply *is*. Therefore, when God speaks, it is always absolute truth because His nature is absolutely truthful.

Thus, when God speaks, it is impossible that what He says is incorrect, misleading, or simply a lie. Further, for God to give an oath in connection with His word, it is intended to “end all dispute” (6:16). As noted before, this oath was not given for His benefit, but for ours. To first encourage Abraham, and then in turn to encourage us, God not only spoke, but spoke on oath of that which He said would come to pass. It is we who cannot fully grasp God’s immutability, and so we doubt. In order to remove all doubt, God will, at times, make an oath. In this, His word is confirmed in us. As the author says, “we might have strong consolation.”

The word is *paraklésis*, and it signifies, “a call (urging), done by someone ‘close beside,’ i.e. a *personal exhortation* that delivers the ‘evidence that stands up in God's court’” (HELPS Word Studies). Thus, it is an encouragement for us to receive not only His word, but His oath in confirmation of His word. Though this should be unnecessary, we are weak in our faith because of our limitations, such as time (patience), life (stresses and challenges), etc. And so God will meet us on our level in such instances, assuring us that we are properly taken care of in our moments of failing. This encouragement is, as the author next says, for those “who have fled for refuge.”

Here we have Old Testament symbolism. The one who had killed another person by accident could flee to a city of refuge and be kept safe from the avenger of blood. This would last as long as the high priest of Israel lived. Upon his death, the

avenger of blood could no longer legally come against that person to avenge the death of their relative. This is found in Numbers 35. Trusting in the word of God is such a refuge where full assurance of protection is found. The absolute surety of that is found in the word and in the oath. We can rest in our place of refuge because God has spoken, and because He has confirmed His word through the oath. Such a place is given for those who seek this refuge in order “to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.”

These words take the reader first back to verse 6:9 which said, “we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation.” The saving message of Jesus is the place of refuge, and in reception of that word one can “lay hold of the hope set before *us*.” Remember again that the words of the epistle are directed to the Hebrew people. The author has been speaking of them collectively. Though as a people they crucified Christ and are thus deserving the punishment of the Avenger of blood, they also have in Christ the death of the High Priest, which is, in Him, safety from the Avenger of blood. This will be more fully revealed in the next verse. The words of this clause secondly refer back to verse 6:11 which then says, “we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end.” Each in the collective of Israel who has come to this place of refuge should persevere, and encourage others to do so, through the words of Scripture – God’s word and His oath.

Life application: When you are facing life’s battles, where do you go for refuge? A bottle, a sexual relationship, television...? None of these things will satisfy and all will fall short of the true encouragement we need. The encouragement which greatly encourages is that which is found in the pages of the Bible. This is because, as God’s word, it reflects His very nature, the nature which is eternal and unchanging. The promises He has made are recorded there. Many of them have been fulfilled, proving that those which are yet promised will turn out exactly as they say. In other words, we have absolute assurance of ultimate victory over sin, death, and Satan. When the Bible says Jesus will descend and call us to Himself in the twinkling of an eye, it will happen. If you are hesitant about your future, or if you are facing a future of pain or sadness, look beyond those things to the promises of the Bible – promises which will surely come to pass because of the absolute truthfulness of God.

Lord, despite the troubles of today, we can read the final pages of the book of Revelation and stand in joyous hope of a time when all wrongs will be righted, all pains will be gone, and all joy will fill our very souls. Thank you for these wonderful promises! Thank you and Amen.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, Hebrews 6:19

In the previous verse, it spoke of the ability to flee “for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” That was based on the Old Testament idea of a city of refuge where one could flee to in order to be protected by the avenger of blood. Such a person was kept safe as long as he stayed within the confines of the city. Upon the death of the high priest, he could no longer be pursued by the avenger of blood, and he was free to return to his home without fear. The symbolism of this verse continues with Old Testament symbolism, and it will also continue this train of thought into verse 20. For now, it says, “This hope we have as an anchor for the soul.”

The “hope” referred to here is what anchors us firmly to the unknown future, meaning what lies ahead for the soul. The rope, then, is the sure and unchanging word of God – where every word is life and a guarantee because of His complete truthfulness. The author poetically describes our hope as an “anchor for the soul.” An anchor is what holds a ship fast to the stability of earth, even in a raging sea. The rope (which is implied in having a boat and an anchor) is the only thing which keeps the two joined, and yet if it’s strong enough, the boat remains safely moored. As it says, “sure and steadfast.”

And so it is with our lives in Christ. The rope is that connection between the two. It is the word of God, which is connected to the anchor, which is held fast by the immutable promises of God which it contains. Even in life’s trials and storms, our hope is joined to the word which testifies of God’s promises through Jesus. This hope is said to enter “the Presence behind the veil.” This is referring back to the

temple described in the Old Testament. The “Presence” is the dwelling of the Lord in the “Holy of holies” where no person was ever allowed to enter, except the high priest and then only once a year. He also never entered without blood lest he die in his sin for not providing atonement for himself.

These things were a shadow of the work of Jesus who entered into the true temple in heaven, passing behind the curtain, and presenting His own perfect and sinless blood to secure our eternal salvation. This will be fully explained later in Hebrews. Thus we have the various items, each symbolizing something else –

The ship: human soul.

The anchor is what grounds us in this life and in anticipation of the next life: the hope.

The rope: The word of God – His promises, His oaths, and the surety that they are sufficient to maintain connection between our soul and our hope.

The veil: death. However, it is expressly stated as the body of Christ in Hebrews 10:20. Thus, more specifically, it means His death of which we partake in receiving Him.

Behind the veil: The heavenly world to come where God and man will dwell together.

For those who are in Christ, we are covered by His blood, which has been presented, and we can have the absolute confidence now – even as an anchor holds a ship firmly in the raging seas – that we too shall pass through the veil unharmed as we enter into God’s presence.

Life application: For those who are in Christ, we should stand assured that Jesus has accomplished everything necessary for our salvation. We need to do nothing but accept His work by faith. Because of His magnificence, how absolutely sure is our anchor. If you are in one of life's storms right now and unsure about how it will turn out, don't fret or be dismayed. Rather trust – simply trust – that all will be safe and calm when the storm is over. The faith you placed in Christ at your time of salvation, no matter how weak now, is strong enough to hold you to the anchor of your salvation.

O God, an anchor for our soul is the hope we possess in Christ Jesus. It is Your word which binds the two together until the day when our hope becomes sight. Forever we shall praise You for keeping us safe in the raging seas which surround us until the day we pass through the veil and enter into Your presence. Praises belong to You, O God. Great things You have done for us! Amen.

...where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 6:20

The translation of the KJV, followed here by the NKJV, does not convey the sense of the Greek. Note the difference:

Lacking: ...where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus.

Correct: ...where, as forerunner, Jesus entered for us.

Vincent's Word Studies explains the change: "The Levitical high priest did not enter the sanctuary as a forerunner, but only as the people's representative. He entered a place into which none might follow him; in the people's stead, and not as their pioneer. The peculiarity of the new economy is that Christ as high priest goes nowhere where his people cannot follow him. He introduces man into full fellowship with God. ... Comp. Hebrews 10:19."

With this slight, but important change noted, the verse can be more properly explained. In the previous verse, it was explained that the hope of the believer is as an anchor for the soul. The hope is in the truth that God cannot lie. Thus, when God speaks out the words concerning the promise which is found in Christ, the “hope” is actually – and in its fullest sense – Jesus. It is what He has done on our behalf, and the surety of what that means, which is our hope. And it is He, as forerunner, who entered the *Presence* behind the veil. In going there to present His blood before God, He has opened the way for all who trust in Him to follow. This is the purpose of the words found in all three synoptic gospels concerning the rending of the veil. In Mark, it says –

“Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” Mark 15:38

The veil, which only the high priest of Israel, and only once a year, could go behind, was torn from top to bottom. The immense size of this veil, and it being torn from top to bottom, was a sign from God that access is restored, completely and wholly, for any who come through Christ. This is then more fully explained in Hebrews 10 –

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh...” Hebrews 10:19, 20

Because Jesus, as forerunner entered behind the veil, we too now may follow Him – through the veil (meaning through His body). With the understanding of this astonishing truth, the author then continues with the words, “having become High Priest forever.” Unlike the high priests of the Old Covenant who performed their duties, died, and whose priesthood was thus transferred to another high priest, Jesus has an eternal priesthood. It is one which will never end. As His priesthood is eternal, then He possesses the ability to mediate for us forever as well. In these words is another hint at eternal salvation. This will be fully explained in Chapter 7, most especially in verse 7:25. For now, the focus is simply on the eternal nature of Jesus’ priesthood which is, as the author says, “according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Once again, the enigmatic Melchizedek is introduced into the narrative. This is the third time he has been mentioned, and bringing him up here serves as a lead-in to Chapter 7. As we have noted in a couple of verses in Chapter 6 though, the author never left his intended subject matter. Everything he has said in Chapter 6 has been to support what will be more fully revealed in Chapter 7. He has built an astonishingly precise case for the surety of God's promises, and the more wonderful nature of their fulfillment, as found in the New Covenant.

As noted, the previous verse said that our hope is an anchor that "enters the Presence behind the veil." Further, it was noted that Jesus is actually that Anchor, because He is our hope. Further, it is Jesus who entered this Presence when He passed behind the veil. And more, as noted above, in chapter 10, the author says that the veil is His body. In all things, Jesus is the center of focus – He is our hope, therefore He is our anchor. He went behind the veil, and the veil is His body. It is His blood that obtained access into the sanctuary, and yet He is the sanctuary. In all things, Christ is the focus. He is the entire point of our faith and He is the object of it.

We read that, because of His work, he has "become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." However, He is not only the High Priest who offers the sacrifice, but He is also the sacrifice. His blood eternally secures believers and His priesthood is an eternal one. Both the humanity and the deity of Jesus is shouted out in every concept. Everything concerning the temple points to Him, and yet the temple is there to exalt God.

Life application: If the deity of Christ isn't resonating in your mind by the continuous stream of shadows, figures, types, and fulfillments the author is presenting, then you are missing the very foundational point of what is being related to us. There is simply no excuse in heaven or on earth for rejecting the tenet that Jesus Christ is God incarnate. It is such a vital tenet that if you reject it, there can be no salvation for your soul; eternal condemnation waits. Be absolutely sure of what you believe and why! When we are asked to confess Jesus as Lord in Romans 10:9, 10, Paul is signifying that "Lord" means "Yehovah" of the Old Testament. Have faith in Jesus who is God incarnate... and be saved.

O God, despite not fully understanding the incarnation or the Trinity, these are tenets which your word clearly proclaims. Help me in my inability to fully grasp these things and help my foundation to be sure, both in Your word and in the deity of Christ Jesus which Your word proclaims. And it is in His perfect name I pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 7

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,
Hebrews 7:1

Melchizedek was reintroduced into the narrative in the last verse of Chapter 6 (the previous verse), but as we saw from the content of Chapter 6, he never really left the author's mind. Everything stated there was to lead the audience to a better understanding of the role of Christ, and how Melchizedek actually prefigured Him, His roles, and His position. Here, the author begins with "For." That is based on the words that Jesus has "become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Those words are derived from David's statement about him in Psalm 110:4. Now, he will begin to explain his logic concerning that statement. But first, he will explain several points about him from the information provided in Genesis 14. Here is everything that is provided about Melchizedek from Genesis 14 –

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:

'Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.'
And he gave him a tithe of all." Genesis 14:18-20

The obvious question is, "If this is all that is recorded about Melchizedek, then where did David come up with the words of Psalm 110:4 which say –

The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
'You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.'

The author will explain this as he progresses, but first, he provides the known background information, beginning with, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God." The words here begin a sentence which will continue through verse 3. The first and most striking point about what is noted here is that Melchizedek is both a king and a priest. This was something not seen under the Old Covenant. In fact, it was strictly forbidden for a king to perform any priestly functions. The offices were kept wholly separate and distinct. At one time, King Uzziah attempted to perform a priestly function with disastrous results. That is recorded in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21.

However, the Old Covenant looked forward to a time when the two offices would meet in one person. That is seen in Zechariah 6:9-15, but which is highlighted by the statement that "the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (6:13) when speaking of a "priest on His throne." As this was forbidden under the Old Covenant, it shows that this coming King/Priest would not rule and mediate under the Old Covenant. Rather, a New Covenant would be established. Melchizedek is said to be first, "king of Salem." The name Salem is said to be the place of Melchizedek's kingship. That is known to be a shortened form of Jerusalem. This is explicitly stated in Psalm 76 –

"In Judah God *is* known;
His name *is* great in Israel.
²In Salem also is His tabernacle,
And His dwelling place in Zion." Psalm 76:1, 2

He is also said to be “priest of the Most High God.” This was the first specific reference to being a priest in the Old Testament. Being a priest of “Most High God” is an obvious reference to the One true God. Therefore, Melchizedek’s priesthood, a valid priesthood before God, actually precedes that of the Aaronic priesthood just as Abraham’s faith-based righteousness preceded the giving of the law (see Galatians 3, particularly verses 15-18). This does not yet explain David’s conclusion that the coming Christ’s priestly ministry would be according to the same order as that of Melchizedek, which is an eternal priesthood, but it does show us that the priesthood of Melchizedek, and that of Christ, are both separate and distinct from that of the priesthood of Aaron, which was under the Law of Moses.

The author next continues to refer to the Genesis narrative with, “who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings.” Abraham has just gone through a great struggle against forces who had captured His relative Lot. He pursued after them and defeated them, retrieving Lot and all that had been taken as plunder. It was after this great battle that Melchizedek met with Abraham “and blessed him.”

The importance of these final three words will be explained in the verses ahead. For now, only the background information is provided. As a side note, there are countless – and seemingly endless – commentaries on who this Melchizedek was. Some state he was Shem, the son of Noah, while others claim he was this person or that. Those commentaries are both pointless and a waste of time. The Bible does not comment on them, nor are they of any concern for the student of the Bible. They are unnecessary diversions from the simplicity of what is recorded in Scripture, and they thus detract from the marvelous logic which is drawn out from the few words recorded about him. Sticking to the Bible, and what is drawn out by David and the author of Hebrews, is what is important concerning this otherwise enigmatic figure.

Life application: There are all kinds of things which are added to the pool of knowledge concerning the Bible. There are historical commentaries such as those of Flavius Josephus. There are false writings such as the Book of Enoch. There are the analyses of Jewish and Christian theologians which date back millennia. One

must be careful to use extra-biblical information only when it complements what the Bible says. Even then, commentators need to be sure to explain that what they are stating is not actually a part of the Bible. Mixing in extra-biblical commentaries as if they are on the same level of authority as Scripture will inevitably lead to unsound theology.

Lord, help us to see our value as you see it. If You were willing to come and unite with human flesh in order to restore us to the Father, then certainly we have great value in Your sight. However, we often don't feel this way about ourselves, so help us in our insecurities and failings to know that because of Christ, we are accepted in Your eyes. To Your glory we pray this. Amen.

...to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”
Hebrews 7:2

The words, “to whom,” are speaking of Melchizedek of the previous verse. It is he who blessed Abraham, and it was to him who “also Abraham gave a tenth part of all.” This is simply recorded history being repeated by the author of Hebrews. At this point, he is not explaining the reason these things were recorded, but that this is what the Genesis account says. Next, he moves to an explanation of who Melchizedek is, based on his name and where he ruled, and so he says, “first being translated ‘king of righteousness.’”

When a person’s name is given in Scripture, the general rule is that the meaning of the name bears importance on the surrounding text as it relates to the coming Messiah or His work. This holds true with Melchizedek. His name comes from two Hebrew words, *melekh* which means “king,” and *tsedaqah*, meaning “righteousness.” Thus, his name means “king of righteousness.” God used him and his name to show us a picture of the coming Christ. Isaiah 32:1 speaks of the coming Christ in this manner –

“Behold, a king will reign in righteousness,
And princes will rule with justice.”

And again, Jeremiah prophesied of Him as well –

“In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this *is* His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

These and other prophecies of the coming Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus, whom Melchizedek was given in Genesis as both a type and picture. Next, the author says, “and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace.’” As revealed in the previous verse, Melchizedek was the king of Salem, an early name for Jerusalem, and a name which was poetically remembered in the psalms. Salem is the Greek transliteration of Shalem, and that comes from the Hebrew word *shalem*, meaning “peace.” Thus, as a title, Melchizedek is the “king of peace.” Isaiah prophesied of this as well. In Isaiah 9:6,7, we read –

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah calls the coming Messiah “Prince of Peace,” not “king of peace.” However, the description of this coming One provides the full meaning. The words, “Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,” show that He is also the “King of peace.” He will rule from Shalem, or Jerusalem, He will do so in righteousness, and He will provide peace in His rule. Isaiah again provides the clarity –

“The work of righteousness will be peace,
And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” Isaiah 32:17

These are but a few of many references to how Melchizedek prefigures the coming Christ in his name and in his title. Therefore, the importance of what transpires between Abraham and Melchizedek is of great significance to believers in all dispensations. Some scholars actually believe that the appearance of Melchizedek is a Christophany, or an appearance of the eternal Christ, in the Old Testament. Others disagree and state that He was merely a type of Christ to come. Either way, it is certain that at least he prefigures the work of the coming Christ.

As a point of doctrine, the author has introduced the fact that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe of the spoils. Some interpret this record of Abraham’s tithing, using the doctrine of “the law of first mention,” in order to justify mandating tithes within a New Testament church. The reason for this is because sound New Testament teachers and preachers understand that the Law of Moses is fulfilled and set aside in Christ. That includes the issue of tithing. They cannot use the law to justify tithing, but they do not want to give up getting a full ten percent of their flock’s money. And so they fall back on this passage from Genesis to justify the doctrine of tithing based on this “law of first mention.”

First, no such law is to be found, explicitly or implicitly, in Scripture; there is no such law. Secondly, if there was such a law, it would include all such first mentions, not just tithing. To this day, people would be required to marry the surviving spouse of a dead brother in order to raise up a child in his name. They would be required to set up a pillar in acknowledgment of a vow. They would need to offer burnt offerings (these predate the law). They would be required to bow in the presence of a superior. Circumcision would be required for all males (circumcision

predates the law). There would need to be a party given at the weaning of a child. The list could go on and on (and on!) as to what would be required based on this supposed law. It is a false teaching.

Life application: The account of Abraham and Melchizedek is a descriptive passage. It prescribes nothing for us today. The reason it was mentioned in Genesis at all is being explained by the author of Hebrews now. There is no mandate which can be derived from it for justifying tithing. If you are taught this by a preacher or teacher, you should probably consider not listening to that person again. He is attempting to justify the unjustifiable in order to profit off of his flock. The New Testament, particularly the letters of Paul, is where our church-age doctrine is to be derived from.

How wonderfully exciting is Your word O God! The treasures it contains are simply astonishing in how they point, time and again, to the finished work of Jesus on our behalf. Thank you for the joy of allowing us to peer into history and see His glory hinted at in the people who came before Him. Amen.

...without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Hebrews 7:3

The author continues to relate information which can be gleaned about Melchizedek from the account found in Genesis 14. However, the information he passes on now is not what was stated, but what was left unstated. He begins with three family-related matters by saying, “without father, without mother, without genealogy.”

In this, he is not literally claiming that Melchizedek had no parents or other genealogy. Instead, he is making the point that the author of Genesis (God through Moses) specifically left these points out in order to establish a connection

to Jesus in this regard. In Genesis, there are numerous genealogical listings. Adam was created, but after him, the successive generations of the people who are recorded are listed by their individual families, showing where they came from, and to what people groups they eventually became a part of. However, nothing is recorded about Melchizedek in this regard. There is no listing of it despite the meticulous care provided for other peoples' family listings.

Even if a person was seen only once, it might say, "John Doe was a Canaanite." That alone would tell us that his father descended from Canaan, who in turn descended from Ham, who in turn descended from Noah. Thus, the genealogical record is implied in the statement. But such is not the case with Melchizedek.

Next, we are told that he has "neither beginning of days nor end of life." Again, fanciful ideas of a supernatural being are made up about Melchizedek because of this statement. And yet, the only point the author is making is that there is no recorded birth record, nor is there any recorded death regarding Melchizedek. For example, Abraham's birth is recorded in Genesis 11:26 –

"Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran."

His death is then recorded in Genesis 25:7, 8 –

"This *is* the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full *of years*, and was gathered to his people."

This is a common occurrence in the Bible. Therefore, the exclusion of such information is as telling as its inclusion. God purposefully left this information out in order to establish a connection between Melchizedek and Jesus. The author demonstrates that, in contrast to others who are recorded, Melchizedek is "made like the Son of God." Notice that he calls Jesus the Son of God, indicating Christ's eternity. Jesus has a human genealogy which is carefully recorded for us in

Matthew and in Luke. However, being the Son of God, he is also “from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

With this understanding, we can now see the author’s logic taking shape. First, it is the words, “without genealogy,” upon which the author’s careful attention explains the first two points – “without father, without mother.” Secondly, it is the eternity of the record of Melchizedek – “having neither beginning of days nor end of life” – which explains the words, “but made like the Son of God.” And finally, the two thoughts then meld into the final words of the verse which says that “he remains a priest continually.”

The word for “continually” is *diénekés*. It signifies to “bear all the way across in an unbroken (non-stop) fashion; to *persist* all the way, to the (intended) end” (HELPS Word Studies). In other words, it means “forever.” It is this information that the Hebrew audience would need to be told. Once explained, the pieces would begin to fit together. Under the Old Covenant, Aaron was the first high priest. Only a descendant of Aaron could minister as a priest before the Lord, and so a meticulous genealogical record was kept. After the first exile, the priests were gathered together in order to minister once again in Jerusalem, but this is recorded in Ezra concerning some of those people –

“These sought their listing *among* those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they *were excluded* from the priesthood as defiled. ⁶³ And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.” Ezra 2:62, 63

These men were excluded until a decision could be rendered by the Lord concerning their genealogy. But what is also true is that these men would die, and someone would step in from the sons of Aaron to continue to minister, one generation after another. However, David said in the Psalms –

“The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Psalm 110:4

Melchizedek was neither from Aaron, nor was there any birth or death record given for him. David, under inspiration of the Spirit, prophesied that One would come who would fit this pattern. There is no need for a genealogy which reaches back to Aaron for this One to minister as a priest. And there is no time after He became a priest that His duties would end. Instead, He “remains a priest continually.” It is Jesus who is referred to, and it is then another of the numerous proofs found thus far in Hebrews which establishes His deity.

David was intimating that the Messiah to come would be God (by using the term Adonai (Lord, when speaking of Yehovah)) in Psalm 110:1. He is, therefore, eternal as is confirmed in verse 4 of the psalm. The author will continue to explain these things concerning Melchizedek in the verses ahead.

Life application: As always, the deity of Jesus Christ is on full display in the book of Hebrews. If you know someone who is in a cult which denies this, are you willing to take the time to show him or her the logical and indisputable connections that the author of Hebrews is making to prove this point? Further, what if someone challenges you on this precept? Will you remember where to go to find the answer to shut them up concerning their heresy. These are matters of the greatest weight and importance. Salvation of the human soul depends on our calling on Jesus through the truth of the gospel, and there is but one gospel. Be ready at all times to defend your stand on the truth of Christ, and be willing to do so when you are given opportunity to do so as well.

O God! How absolutely glorious to know that you have chosen real figures in history to point us to the eternal truths about Jesus our Lord! The words recorded in the Bible demonstrate Your marvelous wisdom in ways we can't fully comprehend or imagine. Thank You, O Lord, for opening our eyes to the beauty of Your glorious word. Amen.

Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. Hebrews 7:4

The author now begins to explain the level of greatness of Melchizedek, something he will do for the next seven verses. The reason for this is because he will then show how the greatness of Melchizedek's priesthood exceeded that of Aaron's. From there, and because of the parallel between Melchizedek and Jesus, he will make the obvious conclusion that the priesthood of Jesus exceeds that of Aaron. To begin this, he relies on what has been stated so far in verses 1 through 3 and says, "Now consider how great this man *was*." It should rather say, "Now consider how great this man *is*." The reason is because of what it said in the previous verse, that he "...like the Son of God, remains a priest continually." It is a state which continues.

From there, he now returns to the thought of verse 7:2 for explanation by saying, "to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils." In 7:2, he repeated the information given in Genesis 14 which stated this fact. Here, he calls Abraham, "the patriarch." It is a term meaning, "first father." He is the "head" or "founder" of a family, and is thus considered the greatest of that family. In the Bible, this title is given to him, the 12 sons of Israel, and to David. We can infer it also applies to Isaac and Jacob. The term comes from *pater* meaning father and *arche* meaning first or greater.

The use of the word patriarch here is purposeful. If Abraham was the greatest of the family of the Hebrews, and if he can be shown to be in a lesser position than Melchizedek, then it will imply a surpassing greatness in Melchizedek. If that can be established, then Jesus – who is the One being set in comparison to Melchizedek – will then be shown to also be in surpassing greatness to the patriarch Abraham – even though He descends from him in His humanity.

It is for this reason that the author now brings in tithing. It was a concept understood by every person in Israel. The specific guidelines, as were practiced by the people, are explained fully in Deuteronomy 14:22-29, with many other references scattered throughout the Books of Moses and elsewhere.

The people were to set aside one-tenth of everything they accumulated each year. For the first two years, they were to enjoy that tenth themselves in the Lord's presence – eating, drinking, and rejoicing in His provision. Of the third year, it says –

“At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. ²⁹ And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”
Deuteronomy 14:28, 29.

This tithe was then further divided (as is mentioned in Leviticus 27) and a 10th of that was given to the priests who ministered at the temple. This was the sacred portion for the Lord's service and the best of all that was gathered.

Life application: Tithes and all offerings of the Old Testament were, like praise, from the lesser to the greater. The common people tithed to the Levites and the Levites to the priests – in ascending order. In the verses ahead, we will see a most fascinating reason why the author proclaims the greatness of Melchizedek. Yes, Abraham gave a tenth to him, but this signifies something even more interesting. How willing are you to be patient and slowly learn the word of God? Too often, people hear about a concept, such as tithing, and they run with it as a precept for the church. However, the law is a completely different dispensation than the church age. Is it appropriate to mandate this Old Testament precept? The only way to know is to learn the word first, and then apply its precepts in context. Be sure not to run ahead of sound doctrine, but keep things in their intended context!

Yes Lord! What a fun thing to look into the words of the Old Testament and then see how they point to the Person and work of Jesus. In understanding these types and patterns, we can more fully understand the surpassing greatness of the work of the Lord. Thank You that redemptive history is so carefully recorded for us to know – with all certainty – that we are following the proper path in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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

Hebrews 7:5

As is recorded in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the author now explains that even though the tribe of Levi descended from Abraham, just as all the other tribes of Israel (their brethren), they were to receive a tenth of the produce of the land. As stated in the analysis of the previous verse, this tenth was mandated in each third year. But even in the other two years when the tithe was eaten by the one tithing, the people were told, “You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.” Deuteronomy 14:27.

If the Levite’s portion during the third year of tithing wasn’t enough to sustain him for the full three years, he would suffer. So, even during the other two years, the people were instructed to tend to the needs of the Levites. This is because their job was to minister to the people, assist in matters of the law, etc. Because of this, they wouldn’t have been able to conduct the normal pattern of business, such as tending to land and fields, that the rest of the people would have had time for.

Understanding this, there is still the matter of the priesthood. It is this which the author is specifically addressing. The people of Israel worked and earned. Every third year, a tithe of that was to be given away, in its entirety. This was to be stored up and given to the Levites (Numbers 18:21-24). However, there was more to be done with it. The tribe of Levi was divided into his three sons – Gershon,

Kohath, and Merari. From Kohath, the line of Aaron was chosen as the priestly line (Exodus 28:1). After the tithe was collected by the sons of Levi, a tenth of that was then to be taken and given to this priestly line (Numbers 18:25-32). In fact, it was to be the best portion as noted in Numbers 18:30.

This then explains the words, “And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood.” It is specifically speaking of the sons of Levi through Aaron, but indirectly from all of the sons of Levi, and then further from all of the children of Israel. It is this particular line who “have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law.” The priestly line of Aaron alone received tithes from the people without paying a tithe themselves. The line of tithing ended in them. However, it is to be understood that this is a precept of the law. Therefore, it is the law alone which then elevates the line of Aaron above the other Levites and thus above the other people of Israel. This is why the author says that it is by the law that the commandment is given concerning the tithes provided to Aaron’s line “that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham.”

In other words, other than by this precept, the priests would be on the same level as all the others in Israel who issue from Abraham. There was no right in them which inherently allowed them to exact tithes upon their brethren. Again, the right they possessed came apart from any personal merit. However, Abraham is said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek apart from the law. This shows an obvious inherent right in Melchizedek which the priests of Aaron did not possess. No law mandated this, and yet it happened. Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth because Melchizedek possessed an inherent right to it. The importance of this will continue to be explained by the author in the verses ahead.

Life application: There is an important application here for us. Tithing is not a New Testament standard, but rather “let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...” 1 Corinthians 16:2. We set our offerings aside to pay for the salary of our pastors and missionaries, and also to keep the church functioning properly. There’s obviously a lot of money in some Christian circles, such as televangelists, and sometimes pastors have it far better than their congregants. However, many pastors – particularly in small churches – eke out a living and are

totally dependent on the goodness of the people they minister to. They have set their hearts, minds, and lives on Jesus, and they should be taken care of by those they tend to. So don't forget them when you give, and also don't forget them during the week with your prayers and assistance if they need it.

Lord, you've been so good to give us caring scholars, missionaries, pastors, preachers, and teachers of Your word. Help us to remember them in the giving of our offerings – both of money and of the abilities we have – that can benefit them. Their service is so much appreciated. Help us to remember to let them know it from time to time as well. Amen.

...but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Hebrews 7:6

The words, "but he" are speaking of Melchizedek. In order to show his greatness, he is being contrasted with Abraham – a figure known in history as the man of great faith, the father of the Hebrew nation, and the example of patience and perseverance in the face of testing. Despite holding such high esteem among the faithful of Israel, the author says that Melchizedek – who in the previous verse received a tenth of the spoils – isn't descended from Levi. As he says, "but he whose genealogy is not derived from them."

The Greek word is *genealogéō*. It is used only this once in Scripture, and it is the basis for our modern word "genealogy." Israel was to pay tithes to the Levites, and the Levites, in turn, gave a tithe to the priests. This was a mandate of the law, not an inherent right. And yet, Melchizedek "received tithes from Abraham." There was no law mandating this, and yet Abraham felt it was appropriate to offer a tenth of the spoils of battle in this way. And this, despite the fact that Melchizedek was not of the Levitical order to whom the law mandated that Israel's tithes be given.

But what is being said here? It, on the surface, appears to be placing the horse in front of the cart... Levi descended from Abraham, not the other way around. However, we'll see the impeccable logic of what the author is intending in the verses ahead.

However, in addition to giving a tenth of the spoils, it was Abraham, not Melchizedek, who received the promises from God. Despite this, it was Melchizedek who blessed Abraham. As it says, Melchizedek "blessed him who had the promises." This was recorded in verse 7:1 when the author stated the facts previously recorded in the Genesis account.

On the surface, this may seem appropriate – after all, Abraham was the one with the promise of blessing from God. However, the author will use the same type of impeccable logic concerning the blessing from Melchizedek in the verses ahead. What we think is backwards or unrealistic is actually something which contains truths which are inescapable when presented from God's perspective.

Not to get too far ahead, but what is happening in this verse is that in accepting the tithes from Abraham, he was accepting the greater position which was accorded to him by Abraham. In turn, he then blessed Abraham. In accepting the blessing, Abraham was acknowledging he was in a lesser position to Melchizedek. But, as we have seen, Abraham had the promise of God, establishing him as a great man indeed. In fact, he is considered as the father of faith to this day. However, the exchange here demonstrates that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.

Life application: It is because of the account set before us, and countless other magnificent accounts which arise, that we study the Bible not just once, but for an entire lifetime. Colleges and seminaries are devoted to the Word of God because it is an inexhaustible resource. We can't simply ignore it, neglect Bible studies and sermons, and expect to be able to comprehend all that the Bible contains. Instead, we need to read, study, listen to, contemplate, pray over, and cherish the Bible each and every day. If we fail in this regard, we can never grow from milk to solid food.

Heavenly Father, You are great and greatly to be praised. And Your word is an amazingly wonderful source of wonder and delight. It is inexhaustible in what it reveals. Layer upon layer of wisdom is revealed in it as we slowly and meticulously search out its pages. And with each layer comes another interconnected item of wonder. Thank You for Your glorious, precious, and superior word! Amen.

Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

Hebrews 7:7

The author here states a simple truth of both the Bible and of life in general. First, he says, “Now beyond all contradiction.” The meaning of the words is that there is absolutely no dispute in the matter which he will present. It is an understood and unquestioned principle recognized by all and at all times. From there, the author completes his thought with, “the lesser is blessed by the better.”

The position or person who is greater (better) bestows a blessing on the lesser. This isn't the same meaning as when we say “Bless the Lord.” Rather, that is a form of praise from the lesser to the greater. Instead, the author is speaking of a blessing in the sense of something that can be bestowed upon another person.

Think of a graduate from college where the certificate is bestowed by the dean or some other important official. When handed to the graduate, a form of blessing might be given such as, “May the Lord bless the days of your working life abundantly.” If someone is named “Employee of the year” this blessing is granted by someone higher in the company's ranks, etc. Or, one might think of the blessing of a father upon his children. The father is considered as the superior in that relationship.

Finally, and most directly to the matter at hand, there is the blessing of Aaron (and his line) upon the people of Israel. This was directed by the Lord, and it was – beyond all contradiction – that Aaron was considered the superior of all of Israel in this regard. That is recorded in Numbers 6 –

““And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

²⁴ “The Lord bless you and keep you;

²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;

²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.””

²⁷ “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.””

As a note of clarification though, this is not speaking of moral superiority or some other related aspect. This is speaking of a position of rank, office, or authority. In the case of Abraham, he would be in a position lower than the “king of Salem” and “priest of the Most High God” in this regard. A difference between Melchizedek and Aaron is seen here. The Lord instructed through the law that Aaron was to bless the people. However, Melchizedek possessed this right apart from the law. Again, as with the receiving of the tithes, we have a confirmation of the greatness of Melchizedek, and the superiority of His office over that of Aaron.

Interestingly, in the account of Isaac meeting Pharaoh in Egypt, it twice says that Isaac blessed Pharaoh. The same word is used in both occasions and can also be interpreted to “greet,” but it appears the author of Genesis was indicating the greatness of Isaac over Pharaoh.

Likewise, Melchizedek is the one who blessed Abraham, not the other way around. In other words, the “lesser” person is Abraham. He, *the man who had received the promise from God*, was considered lesser than Melchizedek! For those who have been instructed in the greatness of Abraham, including his name being mentioned again and again in Scripture – such as in the genealogies of Jesus – this seems rather incredible. But the author states this is the case in order to draw the obvious and amazing parallel of Melchizedek to the Person of Jesus.

The greatness of Melchizedek in redemptive history, then, is one of extraordinary importance. There is still a large amount of information that the author of Hebrews is going to draw out of this one short meeting between these two great men – a meeting which consists of only three short verses in the Bible. The author of Hebrews, under divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is providing us with eternal truths about the nature of Jesus’ ministry which are simply astonishing!

Life application: If the author of Hebrews has drawn out (and will continue to draw out) this much theological information from an encounter of only a few verses in the Old Testament, then how much information has God packed into larger passages recorded there? As you read the Bible, ask questions of the text, seeking answers from God who reveals according to His wisdom. Finally, to understand the blessing of Aaron upon the people of Israel, along with doctrine on the Trinity, please feel free to watch this video – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeYlnhNMg3I&t>

Lord God, it simply can't be more exciting than to peer into the recesses of our history and see the Light of Christ shining through. His superiority over all of history is glorious, and all we can do is praise the immense wisdom which You have displayed in the pages of Scripture as You have revealed Him to a race of beings in desperate need of His coming! Amen.

Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Hebrews 7:8

Again the author brings in the eternity of Melchizedek’s priesthood. As previously noted, this doesn’t mean that Melchizedek is an eternal being, but because Scripture provides no information on him concerning his death, he is a pattern of Jesus who possesses an eternal ministry. Now, the author first states, “Here mortal men.” The word “here” is speaking of the present time of the author where the Levitical system was still being practiced in Israel. It is the Levites who

collected the tithe from the people of Israel, and who then tithed a portion of that to the priests. These are all termed “mortal men.”

There is a recorded death of Aaron, and there is the record of subsequent generations of Levites and priests who came, served, and died. At the time of the writing of Hebrews, anyone in Israel could go to the temple and see the men there and ask, “How old are you?” None could say, “I am eternal.” All were simply mortal men who served out their term and passed on. The offering to the Levites and priests was because they were set apart for the service of God and the temple; their position was an exalted one, despite the fact that they were mortal and eventually died. But then there is David’s allusion in Psalm 110:4 to the coming Messiah who is “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” In contrast to those under the law, the author next says, “but there he.”

This is speaking of the account in Genesis which bears the record of Melchizedek. The Bible specifically overlooks any record of his genealogy, birth, death, and so on. Because of this, it is an implicit hint that we are being asked to overlook such things and to consider him as still living. And indeed, the Bible then confirms that viewpoint in the 110th Psalm. Through these two witnesses, the author says of him, “of whom it is witnessed that he lives.”

This is again intended to show the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over that of the line of Aaron. In one, the priest “lives.” In the other, they are “mortal men.” This understanding can now be coupled with the reception of tithes. Aaron’s line received tithes according to an established law, and they did so in a temporary (mortal) capacity. Melchizedek received tithes by inherent right, and he does so in an eternal capacity. Therefore, one who is “according to the order of Melchizedek” has a priesthood which is both before and after the duration of the temporary system of the Law of Moses. As it is both before and after, it was also there during. While the insert of the law was being played out in redemptive history, the priesthood of Melchizedek (according to Scripture) never stopped being in effect.

In this priesthood, Melchizedek collected Abraham's tenth of the plunder which, in the next two verses, will be analyzed from a most unique perspective. It is one which will show the immense greatness of Melchizedek in the eyes of the author.

Life application: While thinking on what the author is saying, understand that Abraham is mentioned well over 200 times in the Bible while Melchizedek is mentioned just 10. And yet the author intimates that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham! This would have shocked the Jewish people considering their great admiration and esteem for this noted Patriarch. As this is so, and as Melchizedek is simply a type of Christ to come, why would anyone go back to a temporary, ineffective law in order to be justified before God? The ineffective nature of the law is not because the law was faulty, but because we are. Only Jesus, who came without fault, could be justified before the law. And so only by faith in Him can we likewise be justified before God. Think correctly, leave behind the Hebrew Roots false gospel, and come to Christ for your right standing before God.

O Lord, just as the Israelites depended on their genealogy more than a personal relationship with You, so we often do the same. We boast of our family relationships, our notable friends, how much we make, or how much we have. Rather than this, Your word tells us – “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” Help us to boast only in You! Amen.

Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,
Hebrews 7:9

The order of words in this verse is the reverse of the Greek. More literally, it says, "...and so to speak, through Abraham even Levi who is receiving tithes, hath paid tithes" (YLT). The words, "and so to speak," are the author's way of introducing an argument from Scripture based on something implied in the context of what is being revealed. It is a concept which may, at first, seem unfounded or illogical. And so he introduces the thought this way. However, the logic is impeccable, and

it is a tenet which bears heavily on other major doctrines which are found in Scripture.

The author has just stated that “there he receives them,” while speaking of Melchizedek who received the tithes of Abraham. As Scripture witnesses that Melchizedek lives, then logically, “Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham.”

The author makes the case (which Scripture testifies to) that because Levi descended from Abraham, so the tenth that Abraham paid to Melchizedek actually included the sacred portion from Levi who was yet unborn. Abraham (the greater based on being the family head) is the father of Isaac, the father of Jacob, the father of Levi. So when Melchizedek received the tenth from Abraham, Levi is considered in this offering. If the Israelites paid their tenth to the Levites who were set apart to God, then the Levites – through Abraham – paid a tenth to Melchizedek, because Melchizedek still lives. It demonstrates the absolute superiority of Melchizedek’s priesthood over that of Levi.

As was revealed in verse 7:8, the Levites and priests of the Mosaic Covenant were mortal men. They were born into the priesthood, or into the Levitical service, because the law provided for this. They ministered under this priesthood, and they retired and died under this priesthood. There is nothing of the priesthood which attached to them. Rather, they attached to it. And in fact, if they did not minister properly, there was a penalty of separation from the ministry (see Leviticus 10 in the account of Nadab and Abihu). They simply accomplished the work that they were born into. However, Melchizedek’s priesthood, as seen in Scripture, is based solely on his existence. It is his natural right to minister because the priesthood attaches to him.

As the Messiah’s priesthood is “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110), this means that His priesthood is also superior to that of Levi. The logic is impeccable and proves the superiority of Messiah’s work. Therefore, the New Covenant must be superior to the Old Covenant.

Life application: The author of Hebrews has explained, and continues to explain, the superiority of the Person and work of Jesus Christ over that of those who he compares Christ to. He is superior to the angels, He is superior to Moses, He is superior to Aaron, etc. Further, His work initiated a new and eternal covenant which is superior to that of the Mosaic Covenant. Why is the author revealing those things? It is because in demonstrating this superiority, it reveals that those other things are unable to accomplish anything necessary to restore us to God. If there is one theme that we can draw out of the author's continued stream of logical points, it is "Come to Jesus." Nothing else will satisfy because nothing else can satisfy. If you are stuck under the Old Covenant system, you are not God's friend. Instead, you have become His enemy. Come to Christ and be reconciled to God.

Lord God, there is a place where man can go to be eternally filled and eternally refreshed. There is Bread to fill us, and there is a Fount of unceasing Water to rejuvenate us, and it is found in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing else can fill our ever-hungry souls. In Christ, the temporary has passed away. We shall never hunger or thirst again when we come, by faith, to Him. Thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Hebrews 7:10

In the previous verse, the author's impeccable logic was given concerning why the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to that of Aaron. He completes that thought now, while speaking of Levi, by saying, "for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." Abraham is equated to Levi's father, as is the common custom in Hebrew genealogies. Levi was in Jacob, Jacob was in Isaac, and Isaac was in Abraham. Thus, Levi "was still in the loins of his father." In this, what belongs to, or is given away by, the father directly affects the son.

A common example of this is that if a father (Sam Johnson) owns a piece of land, that land will be gifted to the son when it is either gifted to him or when the father dies. However, if the father gives the land to the town for a public park, that land (which would have otherwise belonged to the son) is technically given by the inheriting son to the town. It is as if he had made the grant of land himself through his ancestor Sam. Thus, many generations later, there is the remembrance that this came from the family of Sam Johnson – even to the giving of thanks to the great-grandson who still lives in the town because of his ancestor’s generosity.

Every person who would ever come from Abraham was in Abraham at the moment that Abraham met Melchizedek, and thus their interaction still exists because Melchizedek is a “priest forever.” Those under the law are still giving their tithes, so to speak, to Melchizedek through Abraham. If Melchizedek’s priesthood was said to have ended, this would cease, just as it would cease that Johnson Park would still be given by the descendants if the town were to come to its end. But as long as the town exists and maintains the park, those who descend from Sam are considered as giving to the town.

With this understanding, another technical point must be considered. In verse 7:3, Melchizedek is said to be “made like the Son of God.” The Son of God was not made like Melchizedek. Christ is not subject to Abraham as Levi is. Though His human genealogy descends from Abraham, the fact that Melchizedek is “made like the Son of God” demonstrates that Jesus is prior to Abraham, and that Melchizedek is patterned after the Son of God, not the other way around. However, Jesus’ priesthood, which is based upon His fulfillment of the law and the introduction of a New Covenant, is “according to the order of Melchizedek. It is a priesthood which is not granted by law, but is one which is tied into His nature; it is an inherent right.

What is being relayed here was a critically important point for the Hebrew recipients of this letter who were considering a return to temple sacrifices. Surely Jesus’ priesthood is greater than that of Aaron’s, and a return to the Levitical priesthood would be from the greater to the lesser. A move from Jesus’ covenant to that of Moses, and a move from the priesthood of Jesus to that of Aaron is a

move to that which is obsolete and ineffective because that of Moses/Aaron is annulled in Christ (verse 7:18). There can be no salvation for one who fails to come to Christ.

Life application: The same logic used by the author here in verses 7:9, 10 can be used in other areas of theology. Just as Adam is our first father, and we were potentially and seminally in him when he was created, then we are also legally in him as well. This is the reason why all people are born in sin and under God's wrath. We are, as Jesus said to Nicodemus, "condemned already," and need to do nothing to be sent to hell. Rather, we need Jesus to be born again and go to heaven. Be sure to understand this... it affects your eternal destiny.

O God! How great is the priesthood of Jesus that His work supersedes that of Aaron! How great is the life of Jesus that His work supersedes that of our father Adam! How great is the Person of Jesus! He is truly our All in all and it is to Him that we must turn. Praise, glory, and honor belong to You alone, O wise and eternal God, for the giving of Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? Hebrews 7:11

The author now asks a painfully obvious question. It is a question that every person who is supposedly a follower of Jesus, and yet holds to the Hebrew Roots Movement doctrines, should ask themselves. The question concerns what Paul carefully explains about the Judaizers throughout his writings, but especially in Galatians, and to some extent in Romans. Here, the author begins with, "Therefore." He is asking his reader to go back over what he has said concerning the greatness of the priesthood of Melchizedek and how Christ's priesthood is according to that same order.

And so, based on the “Therefore,” he then continues with, “if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood.” The word translated as “perfection” is found only here and in Luke 1:45. It is “a brand of *consummation (completion)* which focuses on the final stage (*fulfillment, end-phase*) of the consummation process” (HELPS Word Studies).

The implication he makes, and which is realized throughout Scripture, is that perfection is NOT through the Levitical priesthood. This will be stated explicitly in verse 7:19, but it is obvious, even from the time of the ordination of Aaron and his sons. The death of Nadab and Abihu, recorded in Leviticus 10, demonstrates this without the slightest doubt. The recorded death of Aaron, and the recorded death of all people who lived under this covenant, demonstrates it as well. None are made perfect through the Levitical priesthood. If they were, they would continue to live. This is a guarantee of the law itself as is recorded in Leviticus 18:5 –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.”

The promise was made, and none continued to live. All died, even after the performance of the necessary sacrifices for sin and atonement. The author then continues with a parenthetical thought which says, “for under it the people received the law.” The Levitical priesthood did not bring about the law. Rather, the law brought about the Levitical priesthood. And even more, David proclaimed that another priesthood was coming which would be “according to the order of Melchizedek.” Why would David proclaim another priesthood if the Law of Moses was sufficient to bring about perfection? He wouldn’t.

And yet further, David himself was instrumental in helping arrange the Levite divisions for service in the temple. Despite his intimate familiarity with the Levitical rites and laws, he saw that through them none could attain perfection. He knew that the high priest himself was descended from Aaron, who was descended from Adam. Each inherited Adam’s sin-nature as was seen in the analysis of the previous verses. Their imperfection and sin nature required them to sacrifice for their own sins before they could sacrifice for the people. With

these things being perfectly understood as axioms, the author continues with his question by asking, “what further need *was* there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?”

David, looking back to the writings of Moses, and seeing a mere three lines recorded about Melchizedek from the book of Genesis, distinctly saw that the priesthood of Melchizedek was superior to that of Aaron. Under inspiration of the Spirit, he then prophesied concerning the coming Christ that He would come with a priesthood which was not according to Aaron, but according to Melchizedek. The Greek word for “another” implies one of a different kind. It is one which stands in contrast to that which is being spoken of. But what would be the need for such a priesthood if there was already a priesthood in place? Unless there was a defect contained within that first priesthood, there would be no need for another. The question implies a denial in the strongest sense, unless there was an absolute need for what he is proposing. But there was a defect, and thus an absolute need – inherited sin in man. The infection already existed, and the Law of Moses merely highlighted that fact (Romans 3:20). The law could do nothing to change this. And so something else, something better, was needed.

As a side note to this thought, one heresy which arises in Christian theology is a denial of the virgin birth of Christ. A short rebuke to this heresy is that Melchizedek, having no genealogy recorded in Genesis, was a pattern of the Messiah to come. Despite Jesus having a recorded genealogy in His human nature, He has none for His divine nature; He is the eternal Son of God bearing none of Adam’s sin nature. The virgin birth provides the answer for all the theological dilemmas that appeared to be looming when David prophesied of the One to come. To deny the virgin birth is to deny the only tenet which can release us from the bondage of the Law of Moses, a law which highlights, not rectifies, our sin problem.

Life application: The Law of Moses is administered by the Levitical priesthood in regards to violations of the law. The New Covenant does not deal with violations of the Law of Moses for those who are under that law. And so, using circumcision as a benchmark concerning all of the laws found in the Mosaic Law, Paul says in

Galatians 5:2-4, “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” To revert to the Law of Moses in order to be pleasing to God sets aside the grace of God in Christ. Trust in Christ alone, be saved by His grace, and continue in that grace without ever reverting to an annulled law which could save none.

We thank you today O Lord for the wonderful blessings You have given us. Help us to appreciate the sun, the rain, the fluffy white clouds, and the beautiful green trees. Above all, help us to appreciate Your word which points us to Jesus... our great High Priest. Praises to You! Amen.

For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.
Hebrews 7:12

The word, “For,” is given as an obvious conclusion of what was said in the previous verses concerning the idea of “another priest” arising “according to the order of Melchizedek.” It is an obvious conclusion, and the logic is irrefutable. The author says, “For the priesthood being changed.”

Under the law of Moses, the priesthood is called by the author “the Levitical priesthood.” This is because the priesthood is assigned to the tribe of Levi, but even more specifically, it is assigned to the line of Aaron who descends from Levi. The three main families of Levi (which come from Levi’s three sons) – Gershon, Kohath, and Merari – served the priests under this priesthood. The author now says that there is a change in the priesthood. But the priesthood is given based on the law. The two are permanently and inextricably interconnected, and one cannot exist without the other. Therefore, if the priesthood is changed, “of necessity there is also a change of the law.”

Despite being a rather obvious statement, this verse holds the single most profound truth for the Old Testament sacrificial system. David prophesied that One would come who would be a “priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” If this is a true prophecy, then it necessarily means that a new covenant must be built around the new priesthood. Moses received the law which centered on the book of Leviticus – the priestly duties specified for worship. Jeremiah also prophesied –

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” Jeremiah 31:31

This New Covenant is centered on the new priesthood and its new High Priest, who is Jesus. This truth simply cannot be dismissed while holding to the truthfulness of Scripture. Just as a new constitution was established upon America’s break from England which inaugurated her new government, the New Covenant breaks entirely with the Old. As Paul clearly proclaimed –

“Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Galatians 3:21-25

Paul calls the Law of Moses a “tutor.” In Christ’s coming, and for those who come to Christ, we are no longer under this tutor. Therefore, the Old Covenant, in its entirety, is abolished; nailed to the cross. Those mandates which are in the Old and which are repeated in the New are to be followed, but those which are not, such as the Sabbath requirement, are set aside in Christ. Vincent’s Word Studies rightly says of this –

“The fundamental idea of the law was that of a people united with God. Sin, the obstacle to this ideal union, was dealt with through the priesthood. If the law failed to effect complete fellowship with God, the priesthood was shown to be a failure, and must be abolished; and the change of the priesthood involved the abolition of the entire legal system.”

Vincent’s says, “If the law failed.” The Old Testament testifies to the fact that the law, in fact, failed. Even during the times of its failure, prophets came to proclaim a new priesthood and a New Covenant. They came to proclaim a complete break from the Law of Moses. If you can understand this, then in accepting Jesus for what He has done, you have truly entered the gospel of grace granted through Christ’s priesthood. Without understanding this, many who come to Christ leave one foot in the law and put one foot into the New Covenant. But the two are irreconcilable.

Life application: The term, “cognitive dissonance” signifies a state of mind where someone has inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change. When someone is told something that conflicts with what they believe, they either ignore the truth of what is said, or they build a framework of incoherent ideas around a system which attempts to justify their previous false beliefs. In other words, they enter into a world of make-believe. An example of this from the real world may be a conspiracy theory. When a person is told (and even shown) that the conspiracy they have believed in is false, they build their own incoherent framework around it in order to justify their previously held, but incorrect, beliefs. Instead of believing the truth, they are mentally determined to believe the lie. This concept, “cognitive dissonance,” is not done away with in Christ. Rather, it is often magnified in spiritual matters.

The author has now said that the law is changed. This means that the law no longer exists for those in Christ. He will expand on this, and he will explicitly state this in several ways throughout the remaining chapters of Hebrews. And yet, for those who have been told they must still adhere to the Law of Moses (whether in part or in whole) – even after accepting Christ – will often build make-believe frameworks of theology in order to justify why this is not true. In other words, they willingly choose to believe the lie. The word of God is written, and it explicitly

states that the law is done. Christians are expected to accept this, and to rest in Christ, not in deeds of the law. To fail to do this, is to fail to accept the finished, final, and full work of Jesus Christ.

How blessed we are, O God, to be living in the dispensation of Grace which frees us from the strict and unattainable edicts of the law. It is a law which only Jesus could fulfill. It is His work, and not ours, which restores us to a happy relationship with You! Praise His name! Amen.

For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. Hebrews 7:13

The word “For” again takes us back to review what has been said. The author just stated, “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.” He is now building on that thought. It is the beginning of an explanation for the statement, and it will continue through verse 19.

“He of whom these things are spoken” is referring to Jesus. This is based on the words of verse 11 which said, “what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron.” In this, “the order of Aaron” is that of the Levitical priesthood because Aaron descends from Levi. However, Jesus is not of Levi. Instead, He descends from Judah. As the author says, He “belongs to another tribe.” The same Greek word for “another” is used here that was used in verse 7:11. It implies one of a different kind. It is one which stands in contrast to that which is being spoken of.

The priests of Israel during the times of temple worship were Levites from the line of Aaron. This was in accordance with the Law of Moses, specifically, the book of Leviticus (plus parts of other books) which detail the tabernacle layout, the priest’s lineage, and the duties of those priests.

However, the Messiah (Jesus) wasn't from the tribe of Levi. This means there's a conflict which needs to be resolved. If the Messiah wasn't from the tribe of Levi, he couldn't participate in conducting the temple rituals. As the author next says, "from which no man has officiated at the altar." The law designated Aaron's line to do this, and all else were forbidden from such duties. As stated in the commentary of verse 12, this necessarily means that a new covenant must be built around the new High Priest and His priesthood. Not only is this the case, but the very temple itself is no longer a sufficient point of worship for the people. A new temple is required for this new Priest. That temple is under construction even now –

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-23

Now, under this new order of priesthood, the people of God are "living stones" in the temple of God and Jesus is our High Priest. Everything about the nature of Christ and His priesthood is on a completely different order than that of Aaron. It is not merely "different than," but it is "better than" in all ways.

Life application: Are you seeing the majesty of what God is doing in redemptive history! All things of the Old Testament foreshadow something so much greater which is revealed in Christ Jesus! The author is going through painstakingly precise terminology in order to ensure that we don't miss this fact. The error in returning to the Law of Moses is to go from that which can save to that which cannot. Christ has come, a New Covenant has been brought forth, and a new High Priest is realized for God's people. Nothing else is effective in bringing humanity back to God. Only through Christ is this possible.

Thank You O God for allowing us to become living stones in Your glorious eternal temple. How precious it is to be considered as a part of Your handiwork. And, may our lives be used to Your glory until we attain our final glorification some splendid day ahead. This we pray to the honor of Jesus our Lord! Amen.

For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. Hebrews 7:14

The author, for the third time in three verses, again begins his thought with the word “For.” He is building a case which is obvious, and which is indisputable. He just stated, “For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe.” He now builds on that with the words, “For it is evident.” The word “evident” is the Greek word *prodélos*. This is its third and last use in Scripture. It signifies “plain before all men,” and thus “obvious.” The truth of Christ’s genealogy is recorded for all to see. The genealogical records of Israel were meticulously maintained, and a copy of His was carefully restated in both Matthew 1 and in Luke 3.

However, there is more to the word “evident” than this. It was known from many passages in Scripture that the Messiah would come from Judah. As the author says here, “our Lord arose from Judah.” He wasn’t just stating this as something which suddenly came to light in the coming of Christ, and which was then compiled by Matthew and Luke. Rather, he was stating this to Jews who may have never seen these genealogical listings. Even if not, they still had their own Scriptures to testify to this. Jacob’s prophecy of Genesis 49:10 showed this. 2 Samuel 7 reveals this. Isaiah 11:1 speaks of it. Micah 5:2 makes it evident. Further, countless other stories and hints all point to this fact as well in an implicit manner.

Therefore, He wasn’t just “born” into the tribe of Judah, but He “arose” from it. The word is *anatelló*, and it signifies “completing a process.” There was nothing arbitrary about His being born into Judah, but it is the fulfillment of a process which began in the mind of God, even before creation. In Christ’s birth, the goal

had met its consummation. A Priest, but also a King, would come out of Judah. As Melchizedek was a type of this person to come (meaning a king and a priest), and as David confirmed it in Psalm 110, then any king of Judah might feel they qualified to fill this messianic role. And sure enough – after the time of David – a king from the tribe of Judah attempted to offer the sacrifices of the priests. He not only failed, but was punished by God for doing so –

“But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to *his* destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.” 2 Chronicles 26:16

Uzziah may have felt he was a suitable candidate for being Messiah. However, the account continues...

“So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the Lord—valiant men. ¹⁸ And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, ‘*It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the Lord God.*’ ¹⁹ Then Uzziah became furious; and he *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar. ²⁰ And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he *was* leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him.” 2 Chronicles 26:19-20

It is obvious then, that it wasn’t just any king who was prophesied of, but it must be a specific person at a specific time. As the author has already noted, the temple (and all of its rituals) was specifically set aside for the priests who were Levites – and this was mandated by the law itself. By necessity then, all of these things must be set aside or abolished to establish a new priesthood. None of the Old could remain if the New was to be in effect.

As the genealogies of Jesus record, He descended from Judah. And yet we are being instructed that He is now our High Priest. As the author says, “of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.” The priesthood of the law of Moses was a Levitical priesthood. The priesthood of the New Covenant is a Judahite priesthood. Thus, it logically follows then that the Old Testament is set aside to make way for the New. The author has made his case, but he will continue to defend it in the verses ahead.

Life application: If you participate in a denomination that mingles these two covenants, it would behoove you to study this truth further, and to then depart from that body. They are not teaching the truth of God in Christ, and they are not relying on the grace of Jesus Christ to obtain restoration to God the Father. Such a group of people has departed from the truth of God and they are teaching a false gospel.

Yes Lord! We look to You alone and to Your work – accomplished on our behalf – for our reconciliation to our heavenly Father. Help us to see the clear distinction between covenants, and to understand what is for our edification only and what is for doctrine in this dispensation. May we never reapply works of the law to our walk before you, which then sets aside the grace You have so lavishly poured out on us. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.

And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest... Hebrews 7:15

For the past two verses, the author has discussed the replacement of the Old Covenant with the New. This is obvious from the words, “for the priesthood being changed.” Because of this, “there is also a change of the law.” With this understanding, he then said that the One spoken of in this change “belongs to another tribe.” Understanding this, he continues with the words, “And it is yet far more evident.”

Here, the author uses a word unique in Scripture, *katadélos*. It is a more forceful word than that used in verse 7:14. It was “evident” that Jesus descended from Judah. However, it is “far more evident” that when another priest comes according to the order of Melchizedek, that the wholly inadequate nature of the Levitical priesthood is realized. And so, what is proposed in the previous verses is to be considered more fully here. There was a defect in the previous priesthood which required its replacement.

This is necessarily true because there is a change in priesthood, not only in a minor sense but in the complete sense. This new High Priest, selected by God, descended from the tribe of Judah in the flesh, but in his deity is “like Melchizedek” in the sense that He is also without genealogy – having no beginning or end of days.

It would be unheard of for a descendant of Judah to minister in the temple because it would violate the law which Moses received directly from God. But even if a descendant of Judah were to somehow work his way into this position, it wouldn’t be nearly as difficult to imagine as it would for one on the order of Melchizedek. Why? As previously stated, because Melchizedek was before the time of Levi.

Being before Levi means that the Levitical priesthood actually would have superseded the priesthood of Melchizedek unless by one thing – that it was eternal; without beginning or end. If this is the case, and Genesis clearly records that it is, then the Levitical priesthood cannot supersede it. Rather, the Law was introduced “so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful” (Romans 7:13).

The Law of Moses with the temple worship could in no way save, but it could only point us to our desperate need for an even greater covenant with a greater and more complete sacrifice. And that priest “in the likeness of Melchizedek” did appear! As the author states, “there arises another priest.” He has arisen, and He is, even now, interceding on our behalf to the Father. Jesus is a “priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Life application: When you sin or err as a Christian, you already know how utterly sinful sin is... it necessitated the death of our Lord Jesus. Think on this always and remember that our actions required a most precious and eternal payment.

Lord God, what You have done for us through Jesus is greater than we can imagine. It is the marvelously splendid work of an infinitely wise and loving Creator. To You we bow, to You we confess, to You we sing our praises, O mighty and glorious God! Amen.

...who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. Hebrews 7:16

The words, “who has come,” are referring to Jesus. It is He who was referred to in the previous verse as “another priest” who came “in the likeness of Melchizedek.” In this, He has come “not according to the law of a fleshly commandment.” The meaning is that the priesthood of Aaron was one which focused on externals. They washed with water, they ate certain foods, they performed animal sacrifices, and so on. These are referred to in Hebrews 9 in some detail. None of the things conducted by the Levitical priesthood was actually efficacious in nature. Rather, it all only pointed to the coming Christ. In Him, rather than a fleshly commandment, there is a law “according to the power of an endless life.”

For the past 17 verses, the author has shown us the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus over that of the Levites. Melchizedek was shown to be greater than Abraham because he bestowed the blessing rather than Abraham. Further, Abraham gave a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek. This indicated that Melchizedek was in a position superior to that of Abraham. Thirdly, David looked back on the priesthood of Melchizedek and said that a new priesthood was coming in the order of Melchizedek’s. All of these points have been used by the author to prove that his priesthood was superior to that of the Levitical priesthood which came through Aaron.

Jesus' New Covenant priesthood, being on the same order as Melchizedek's, then supersedes that of the Old Covenant. In this verse, we see another point which demonstrates this "greater than" theme. Jesus, because of the resurrection, has an indestructible life. As will be explained further in verses to come, the Levites filled a position in time and then died. For this reason, there were many high priests throughout the ages. But Jesus is a High Priest forever. He prevailed over death because of His sinless nature. As Peter proclaims in his Pentecost speech to the people of Israel –

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning Him:

'I foresaw the Lord always before my face,
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.'" Acts 2:22-25

Death could not hold Jesus and can it never touch Him again. He is "a Priest forever." Hallelujah!

Life application: There is no time that our prayers are not heard. Because Jesus is a priest forever, He is an eternal Mediator for us. For the believer, every prayer that we utter to God in faith is received by Him. Further, because Jesus' work was spiritual, not fleshly, everything He accomplished for us is of a spiritual nature. Whereas the sacrifices of the Law of Moses could never internally purify the people, that of Jesus can. Salvation is not a repeatable thing in Christ. Rather, it is a one-time for all-time occurrence. Take time today to reflect on your status before God because of Christ, and then be sure to thank and praise God for what He has done through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord, sadness must have come upon the ancient faithful as they saw their high priests die and return to the dust. Each new high priest was an uncertain entity and a fallible man. But, glory to You, O God, that we have an eternal High Priest – One who never fails, never tires, and never disappoints. We have Jesus! Thank you for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

For He testifies:

“You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 7:17

The author now returns to his proof text concerning Melchizedek to support his words of the previous verse. There he said that the Lord’s priesthood, which is in the likeness of Melchizedek, is “according to the power of an endless life.” From there, this verse is now introduced with the word, “For.” He has made the statement, and now he supports it by going back to inspired Scripture, which contains the words of God being spoken out through the psalmist. There, God testifies concerning Christ that, “You are a priest forever.”

David was speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit as he penned these words, and they looked forward to the coming work of Jesus. As was seen in the previous verse, this new priesthood is eternal because it is based “not according to the law of a fleshly commandment.” Instead, it is one which is spiritual in nature, and it deals with the internals, not the externals. How absolutely unimaginable it must have been to the Levitical priests and the Sanhedrin that the One they accused and condemned as worthy of death, and who indeed they asked to be crucified, would supersede their priestly order by an indestructible life! As Paul says it in Romans 1:1-4 –

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of

David according to the flesh, ⁴ *and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*”

It is by the power of the resurrection that Jesus proved He was and is fully God, eternal, and a “priest forever.” Further, this is “According to the order Melchizedek.” Thus, it is one of inherent right, one which is greater than Levi (just as Abraham was greater than Levi), and most especially because of its eternal nature. As Christ is eternal, and as He is the High Priest of the New Covenant, He is “a priest forever.” It is for this glorious reason that the believer in Him is both eternally secure and always allowed access into the most holy place.

Life application: We have an eternal Mediator who sits at the right hand of the Father and is always interceding on our behalf. If your prayers seem like they are not being answered, don’t fret – they are. Jesus is there, working out His office of High Priest, and aligning your needs with His glory so that in the end you will see the absolute wisdom of what was accomplished on your behalf. Please understand this as you face trials or hardships – Jesus is there with you and is tending to every need as an empathetic and merciful High Priest.

Lord, may I never doubt Your glorious hand in my life. Rather, Your word assures me that You are now and always “a Priest forever.” You can empathize with my weakness and you have the exalted position at Your Father’s right hand. Certainly, those things assure me of Your ability to handle every woe and trial I may face. Glory to You, and may Your glorious name ever be praised. Amen.

For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, Hebrews 7:18

The word “For” is used again by the author of Hebrews to continue building his case concerning the superiority of Jesus’ priesthood over that of Aaron. Now, to show this as in indisputable truth, he reveals that not only is it superior, but it fully

replaces the very commandment which established the Levitical priesthood. The words are, “For on the one hand there is the annulling of the former commandment.” He is referring to the Law of Moses. This is the “commandment” which established the priesthood. This is derived from verse 12 where he stated, “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.”

The priesthood is that of Aaron. In changing that to the priesthood of Christ Jesus, the law is changed. But now he further clarifies that. Not only is it “changed,” the law itself is “annulled.” The second supersedes and entirely replaces the first. Therefore, in the coming of Christ’s priesthood, the law which established the priesthood of Aaron is annulled. The word annulled means “declared invalid.” The covenant known as the Law of Moses is made null and void through the establishment of the New Covenant. This is what Paul proclaimed all the way back in the book of Romans. There he said, “For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). For those who have come to Christ, the law is completed for them in Him and it is annulled. Righteousness comes through Christ’s fulfillment of it, not through continued observance of it.

The author then explains the failing of the Law of Moses in regards to fallen man with the words, “because of its weakness and unprofitableness.” The word translated as “weakness” refers to someone who is sick, and thus without vigor or strength. The word translated as “unprofitableness” simply means “useless.” The law lacked the strength to accomplish its intended purpose, which was to reconcile man to God. Because of this, it was useless. Something that cannot accomplish what it is made for is discarded. A cup with a hole in it is thrown away. A computer without a processor is a pointless piece of junk. Anything which is defective because it cannot accomplish its main purpose is replaced. Such is the case with the Law of Moses. The main thing the law could actually do for fallen man was to show him how sinful he was in the eyes of God. Paul explains that in Romans as well –

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:20, 21

In annulling the former commandment, Christ brought in a new one. But the way He did this was by fulfilling the law. The law must stand until it is fulfilled. But once it is fulfilled, it is then replaced. Paul again explains this in Romans –

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4

As far as the “annulling of the former command,” it is important to understand that this means “in its entirety.” Throughout the years, people have attempted to divide the law into that which is still pertinent and that which isn’t by naming parts of it the “moral law” and other parts of it the “ceremonial law.” However, no such distinction is made in Scripture. Rather, the Old Covenant law is annulled in its entirety.

This doesn’t mean that there isn’t overlap in what was mandated in the Old and that which is expected in the New. Many of the Old Covenant laws are incorporated into the New as binding precepts, such as not murdering. If the supposed “moral law” of the Old was still in effect, then the Sabbath, which is clearly spoken of as fulfilled in Christ, and not required to be observed, would still be a requirement. All Christians would be home doing nothing on Saturdays. However, the Sabbath is not mentioned as a requirement in the New Covenant, and is therefore set aside. It’s that simple. As it was one of the Ten Commandments, then this clearly demonstrates that the entire law of Moses was annulled irrespective of a “moral” or “ceremonial” distinction.

Understanding this, does this mean the former regulation was defective or having some type of error? Not at all! As Paul says, “Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).

The law fulfilled one purpose in that it demonstrated that no one could be justified by observing it because no one could keep it perfectly. Only Jesus was able to meet its strict requirements, which He did. Thus, He fulfilled it on our behalf. As He said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

Paul then explains this in Galatians with the words, “*Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.” Galatians 3:21

The law could not bring fallen man to righteousness, not because there was a defect in the law, but because there is a defect in man. Christ, in whom there was no sin (no defect), was able to fulfill the law. In its fulfillment, He annulled the law. For those who are in Christ, He is the end of the law for righteousness. Now, God is no longer imputing sin to those who are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). For those who are not in Christ, sin – because of the law – is still being imputed. The choice is ours. We can come to Christ and His fulfillment of the law, or we can attempt to be righteous apart from Christ by observance of the law. Choose wisely.

Life application: The words of Hebrews 7:18 are explicit and they are prescriptive. Jesus fulfilled what we couldn't, and for those who accept that premise, the law is annulled for them. They move to a new and better covenant. However, the law is not abolished for those who do not come to Christ. If one chooses to reject Christ, it remains binding on them; they must fulfill it perfectly or be eternally lost. What a sad state of affairs Christianity is in today. The Hebrew Roots movement has brought many to a state of rejecting the finished work of Christ and reimposing precepts of a law which could never save fallen man. They have set aside grace, and they have brought on themselves condemnation. Run, don't walk, from this terrible theology.

Jesus, how grateful we are... You alone could meet the strict demands of the law which otherwise only bring death. And You have given us the choice – we can accept Your fulfillment of it on our behalf, or we can attempt (and fail) to meet its mandates on our own. We choose You, O Christ! We choose life! To Your honor and glory alone! Amen.

...for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is* the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. Hebrews 7:19

The word “for” once again builds on the continuing thought. The previous verse said, “the former commandment” was annulled “because of its weakness and unprofitableness.” That was a clear and precise statement. The law was ineffectual in accomplishing what it was purposed to do, and thus the law was annulled through the coming of Christ who alone could fulfill it. The reason for the ineffectual nature of the law was the inherent defect of sin in man. As the author now states, “for the law made nothing perfect.”

Fallen man (all men born from Adam are fallen) is imperfect. The law was given to restore man to a right relationship with God. However, that never came about. If it did, man would have stopped dying. As it says in Leviticus 18:5 –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.”

Those under the law were promised that they would live if they did the things of the law. None under the law lived... until the coming of Christ. Why did Christ live? Because He was and is perfect. The law did not perfect Him; He fulfilled the law. This is why the author next says, “on the other hand.” This is in contrast to the words of the previous verse. Lining the two up side by side shows this –

7:18 – “...on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment.”

7:19 – “...on the other hand, *there is* the bringing in of a better hope.”

That “better hope” is “the change of the law” referred to in verse 7:12 which comes with another priest according to the order of Melchizedek as stated in 7:15, 16. It is through this “better hope” that “we draw near to God.” This better hope is founded on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He died in fulfillment of the law. In His death and burial, He carried away the sins of the people. And in His resurrection, He offers eternal life to all who believe in Him and what He has done.

Stated again, the entire thought is that the law was set aside because it lacked the power necessary to make a man righteous before God. The imperfection of the temple worshipers remained after each and every visit to the temple. But perfection and holiness is what God demands of us –

“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God *am* holy.’” Leviticus 19:2

Because the law could not produce this in fallen man, by fallen man, he could not draw near to God. Nothing unholy can enter into the presence of the holy God. In this, it is seen that the law could never make man righteous, but instead could only show him how utterly sinful he is in the presence of God. Something more was needed to bring us near to Him... something perfect in and of itself. This is the purpose of the incarnation.

In and by His perfection Jesus prevailed over the law. Now, through faith in Him alone we stand righteous and holy in God’s presence. This isn’t because the righteousness is inherent in ourselves, but because Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us. Paul explains this transaction in Galatians 3:10-14 –

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.’ ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Life application: Take time to ponder the wonderful love of God towards us in Christ Jesus! When we were powerless to help ourselves, Christ stepped in and carried our burdens and failings. He became a curse for us so that we could be redeemed from the curse of the law. Now think again on that. If the law brings a curse, why would anyone want to be back under that law? What perverse attitude would say to God, “Thanks for trying, but I will do it on my own?” Only condemnation awaits such a perverse soul.

O God! Surely we have a “better hope” than the ancient worshipers. Their hope looked forward to the Messiah and they only saw darkly what was coming – through shadows and figures. But our hope looks back on His glorious work, accomplished on our behalf and forward to the day we are glorified in Him. How marvelous are your wondrous ways O God! Amen.

And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath... Hebrews 7:20

Although it is getting ahead in thought, to understand what the author is saying in this verse, it must be understood what the thought is being contrasted to. That will be revealed in the next verse, but in order to properly identify what that is, a history lesson concerning the Levitical priesthood is necessary.

In Israel, Aaron was appointed as high priest apart from any oath. He was selected by God and told that this would be his position. This is recorded in Exodus 28 –

“Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and* Aaron’s sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ² And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³ So you shall speak to all *who are* gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.” Exodus 28:1-3

Later, the Levites were selected by God in place of the firstborn of Israel to minister under Aaron and his sons. This is recorded in Numbers 3 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ¹² ‘Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, ¹³ because all the firstborn *are* Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord.’” Numbers 3:11-13

This appointment of Levi was the Lord’s will. He simply decided this was how it was to be, and He made the appointment. On the other hand, Jesus’ priesthood came about in a different way. The author states as much by saying, “And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath.” In other words, He was given an oath assuring His priesthood would be established. Both of these thoughts will be further explained in the coming verse.

Life application: Having an understanding of the Old Testament helps us to more fully understand what is being relayed in the New Testament. If one only reads the New, they will have the information they need, but they may not have the answer as to “why” things are the way they are. We might be told by a mechanic that the motor is now fixed and ready to be used again. If we are content with that, we will get in the car and drive away satisfied. However, if we want to know why the thing

stopped working, we will want to review what the underlying cause of the breakdown was, through an explanation of how the motor works, what keeps it running properly, and how to avoid future breakdowns. In understanding the results which are revealed in the New, but without knowing all of the mechanics of the Old, we can have future breakdowns in our theology when someone comes along and gives bad information on what the results “really” mean. Without the foundation, we can be led astray by cheating car mechanics (if such people actually exist!). The same is true with theology and with those who would misdirect our understanding of a matter, by incorrectly explaining how we got to the result which is revealed in the New. In other words, it is the wise and prudent Christian who will be studied in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Great are Your ways O Lord and greatly are You to be praised! We lift our hands to You in praise for the glorious work of Jesus which was accomplished on our behalf. Instead of death, we receive life. Instead of fear, we can worship with joy! How precious You are O God! Thank You for what You have done through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

...(for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

“The Lord has sworn

And will not relent,

‘You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek”), Hebrews 7:21

This verse is a parenthetical thought between verses 20 and 22, but all three are one complete sentence. The author, in the previous verse, just said that Christ was made a priest with an oath. This verse now explains that by using the same quote from Psalm 110 which has been cited several times already. First, he begins the parenthetical thought by saying, “for they have become priests without an oath.”

This is speaking of those of the Levitical priesthood. As noted in the previous commentary, including the verses from Scripture which supported this thought, Aaron was selected by God and told that this would be his position (Exodus 28:1-3). Further, the Levites then were selected by God in place of the firstborn of Israel to minister under Aaron and his sons (Numbers 3:11-13).

The Lord made the decision, and He appointed the men to fill the positions. There was no oath involved in the process. However, the author continues with, “but He with an oath.” This is speaking of Christ Jesus. His priesthood wasn’t a mere appointment at a certain moment in time, but rather it was promised by God and in advance. And more, it was promised with an oath. When did this happen? It was promised “by Him who said to Him.” This is speaking of the Lord (YHVH) in his discussion with the Lord (Adonai – meaning Yehovah, who is Jesus) who are named in Psalm 110:1. Later in verse 4 of the psalm, the Lord (YHVH) is spoken of again. This is what the author now cites –

“The Lord has sworn
And will not relent,
‘You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek’”),

It is this verse which comprises the oath. It was recorded by David in the Psalms many hundreds of years in advance of the coming of Christ. “The Lord has sworn” is the oath. “And will not relent” is given as an absolute surety of the oath. The Lord will never change His mind concerning this matter. “You *are* a priest forever” is the substance of the oath. “According to the order of Melchizedek” explains the nature of the priesthood. No such oath was promised to Aaron. Therefore, the oath is another sure proof of the supremacy of the priesthood of Christ over that of Aaron.

In this then, the author reminds us that it was with an oath that Jesus was made “a priest forever.” As God simply *is*, then anything He says must *be*. There can be no untruthfulness or change in God or in God’s word. The oath then is for our benefit – so that in our moments of weakness or doubt we can turn to God’s word and be absolutely reassured of His guarantee. The Levitical priests, meaning the line of Aaron, didn’t receive an oath from God. Rather they were given a directive to conduct their work faithfully. Should they fail in their duties, there were consequences for their failure, such as is recorded in Leviticus –

“And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die.” Leviticus 16:13

This Levitical system then, by its very nature, had to be temporary. In Jeremiah 31:31, God promised a New Covenant to the people and with the covenant came the oath of a new priesthood. This priesthood, by its very nature, cannot ever end.

Life application: Jesus Christ has become the eternal Mediator of an eternal covenant. Because this is so, then the salvation of those for whom He mediates must also be eternal. Can you see these logical connections? If so, then you should have no fear when you fail as a Christian. No sin is too overwhelming for God to withhold His forgiveness, and there is nothing in all of creation that can separate you from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus. If you’re feeling overwhelmed by a past sin, cast that burden on Jesus – your “priest forever.” Allow Him to reassure you of the great and unlimited grace of God.

Lord God, thank You for opening the truths of Your word to us. It follows a logical and orderly sequence, and it leads us to the assurance of Your great love, grace, and mercy. And it shows us of the supremacy of the New Covenant over the Old. What we have in Jesus is eternal, and it is based on an oath from You that it will never change. Glory to You through Jesus... our Priest forever! Amen.

...by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

Hebrews 7:22

The words here reflect a sentiment similar to Hebrews 1:4 –

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

The author is slowly and meticulously showing the superiority of the various aspects and ministries of Christ in comparison to those of other entities. Here, he says, “by so much more Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant.” This is based on the words which show He was made a priest by oath. Thus His priesthood is vastly superior to that of Aaron. He has also now further defined the “better hope” of verse 4:19, calling it a “better covenant.”

There was a hope in the Old Covenant which was found in Leviticus 18:5, which said concerning its precepts, “if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.” That hope was indeed found in the Mosaic covenant, but it was one which was unattainable by fallen man. The only actual hope that it displayed was in Christ to come. Only He could “do” the things of the law. In the doing of them, He fulfilled it. This is the better hope which is found now in the “better covenant.”

The word “covenant” is the Greek word *diathéké*. It is introduced now, and it will be used 9 times in chapters 8 and 9. It signifies, “a set-agreement having *complete terms* determined by the *initiating party*, which also are fully affirmed by the one entering *the agreement*” (HELPS Word Studies). The author has, as he has repeatedly done in Hebrews, introduced a word or concept which he will then expand on as he continues with his instruction.

The word translated as “surety” is an adjective found only here in the Bible, *egguos*. It signifies “under good security,” and thus it is a guarantee. Jesus is that guarantee. Meyer’s NT Commentary states of this, “For Christ, the Son of God,

had become man in order to proclaim this covenant upon earth, had sealed it by His sufferings and death, and had been mightily accredited by His resurrection from the dead as a Founder of the Covenant who had been sent by God.” This is correct, and it is expanded on with the thoughts of Albert Barnes. He states, “He is the pledge that we shall be saved. He becomes responsible, so to speak, to law and justice, that no injury shall be done by our salvation, though we are sinners.”

The word says that Jesus Himself is our surety. It is an absolute statement of the doctrine of eternal salvation (once saved always saved). If we put our trust in Christ as stated in Romans 10:9, 10, we are – at that moment – sealed with the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians 1:13, 14. That is an eternal guarantee. But it is based on what Jesus has accomplished. Our faith in Him is that of a surety because the Holy Spirit has sealed us. It is not based on what we have done, but it is only by faith in what He has done. If our salvation is to fail, it means that Jesus, not us, has failed. Such is an impossibility.

As a point of doctrine, and of surety of what is stated here, it should be noted that over the past two verses the author has shown that the priesthood of the New Covenant was made with an oath. This was something which was lacking under the Old Covenant. This oath was actually recorded in the times of the Old Covenant in the Psalms – through the hand of David. In ways such as this, the Bible confirms itself and all of its contents.

Historically, the Bible is a reliable reference for what has occurred. Archaeologically, no evidence has ever been found to refute a claim made in its pages. Rather, archaeology – again and again – supports the biblical record. Philosophically, what can be determined about the nature of God from the created order is fully supported by what the Bible records. Internally, it reaches back and forth, confirming itself in various ways. Nothing is left unanswered when properly researched.

Because of these and so many other assurances, when we see in Jeremiah that a New Covenant is promised and that it will be an eternal one, we don't need to second guess what is being alluded to. Instead, we simply need to see what the

Bible declares about it. This is the purpose of the epistles, including Hebrews. And Hebrews, again and again, demonstrates several truths: 1) Jesus is “greater than” each point or person to whom He is compared in the Old Covenant; 2) Jesus is the focal point of both adoration and worship, to the glory of God the Father; and 3) what is proclaimed in the New Covenant sets aside the Old Covenant in its entirety.

Life application: If you are bound in a legalistic environment which attempts to mingle the unattainable requirements of the Old Covenant with the New, or if you are in a sect or group which exalts any name above “Jesus” as Lord, or if you believe that you can lose your salvation after being saved by Jesus, then you have failed to receive the simplicity and grace of Jesus Christ – the “surety of a better covenant.” Come to Christ, rest in Christ, and do not be led astray by false doctrines which would steal your joy in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord Jesus, we bow to you in adoration. You are majestic in splendor and beautiful in holiness. To You we give thanks, praise, and exaltation! Fill us with Your Spirit and lead us in paths of righteousness as we grow in Christian maturity. In Your perfect name we pray! Amen.

Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. Hebrews 7:23

The author now provides another case for the supremacy of Christ’s priesthood over that of the Levitical priesthood. He first says, “Also there were many priests.” The Greek more literally reads, “Also, there have been made priests many.” There was a long succession of priests, each being consecrated to the priesthood in order to meet the needs of the requirements specified by the law. There was any given number of priests at any given time, and there was also a high priest among them. In this, they continued on for a duration and then they were replaced. The basic fact that there were many priests throughout the years shows the weakness of the Levitical priesthood, but the reason that there were many is “because they

were prevented by death from continuing.” This shows an even greater weakness in the law and its priesthood.

Death prevented them from continuing on in the priesthood. However, Christ is “a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” This is because of “the power of an endless life” (verse 7:16). The supremacy of Christ’s priesthood is clearly established in this.

The first high priest of Israel was Aaron who descended from Levi through his grandfather Kohath and then through his father Amram. From Aaron came others sons and through his sons the line continued for about 1500 years. There were strict regulations for these men including who they could and couldn’t marry. In addition to this, there were other requirements. Some of these requirements were so precise that if they deviated from them, they would die for not properly performing them –

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. ² So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” Leviticus 10:1, 2

These were two of the four recorded sons of Aaron at the establishment of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Nadab was the eldest but never attained to the office of high priest because of his unauthorized action. Instead, his younger brother Eleazer became the high priest at the time of Aaron’s death. Other high priests came and went, some being considered failures in their appointed office. But even the successful ones couldn’t continue forever. Being sons of Adam, they inherited his sin and also added their own sins in life. Such sin, then as now, results in death. Here in this verse, as in other verses, the author is demonstrating the insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood. No high priest of Israel attained the perfection necessary to carry on the office, but rather died and left his duties unfinished.

- 1) The wages of sin is death,
- 2) these priests died and their time in the priesthood ended, therefore,
- 3) their time in the priesthood failed to resolve the sin problem in their lives.

If this is so, then those on whose behalf they ministered also failed to have the sin problem resolved in their lives as well. In this, the entire system is shown to be a failure. However, Christ, being a “priest forever,” is shown to have no sin. As this is so, then His ministry is able to resolve the sin problem for those He ministers to. The system is shown to be a success.

Life application: Time and again it is shown that the Law of Moses failed to accomplish what it was intended to do, which is to restore man to God. This doesn't mean that the law itself was defective, but that sin in man rendered it ineffective. Christ, who was born without sin and who lived without sin, fulfilled the law for us. Why would we ever want to go back and live out the precepts of a law which could never save anyone? The author is not wasting words through useless repetition, but he is rather showing – again and again – the supremacy of what Christ has done for us. It is the strongest appeal possible to his readers – “Come to Christ and be saved from what the law could never save you from.”

Lord God, no matter how many times we hear the good news, it is always fresh and new to our souls. The law stood against us and condemned us. Jesus took that burden from us and delivered us from the penalty of sin. In Him, we have the surety of eternal life, because He is the fount of that same eternal life. Thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Hebrews 7:24

The words in the Greek place the emphasis on “unchangeable,” not on “priesthood.” In other words, it reads more correctly, “...has his priesthood unchangeable.” The priesthood of Aaron changed with the passing of each high priest; the priesthood of Jesus remains forever.

The previous verse explained the mortality of the priests in Israel and how one generation would follow another in performing their duties. Upon their deaths, they would return to the dust while another priest would continue on in place of the dead. In contrast to this, the author now begins this verse with “But.”

Because Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man, He was born without sin. He was also born under the law, which He then lived out perfectly. In this, He met the strict requirements of the law. After this, He then gave His own life to pay the sin debt of all who come to God through Him. This is a precept known as substitution which is found within the law itself. An innocent animal was killed in place of one who sinned, receiving what the sinner deserved. Each animal under the law, in type, looked forward to Christ. Thus, He not only fulfilled the law through obedience, but He also fulfilled the law in typology.

Just as each mediator of the Old Covenant was temporary, so then were his sacrifices. Further, as those sacrifices were in a different category, an animal instead of a man, they could not actually do what they were given to do (see Hebrews 10:4). Instead, they only looked forward to the One who would fulfill their typology. In contrast to these temporary priests with their ineffectual sacrifices, Jesus’ priesthood is ongoing and it is fully effectual to save. This is “because He continues forever.”

Because Jesus is eternal, and the offering of Himself was perfect, so then is His sacrifice; He “has his priesthood unchangeable.” This same type of thought has been presented several times in Chapter 7, but the author continues to restate the truth to ensure

- 1) we grasp and do not forget what He is saying, and
- 2) there is no way to wiggle out of the truth presented in order to justify a return to the Law of Moses. Where the priesthood of the Law of Moses was changeable, the priesthood of Jesus is not. The superiority of Jesus’ priesthood over that of Aaron is, once again, demonstrated.

Life application: Because we are dull in our thinking, we easily forget the truths presented in Scripture. We sin, often in a grievous manner, and we wonder how our sin could ever be forgiven. But the author explains it completely, and he will continue to do so in the verses ahead, using the same logic he has thus far. If you have called on Jesus as Lord, don’t despair over your sins. Rather, regret them and acknowledge how they must grieve the Lord, but don’t despair as if they are unpardonable. To have this attitude is to diminish the great and glorious power of His atonement. The same Lord who spoke the universe into existence is the Lord who can handle your waywardness. If Satan is pestering you about a sin you have committed, remember Paul’s comforting words –

“What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies.” Romans 8:31-33

O God! Help me always to remember that neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate me from the love of God that is found in Christ Jesus my Lord. Thank You that because of Him I am eternally secure. Hallelujah and Amen!

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25

“Therefore” is based upon the argument presented in the previous verses. The author has shown numerous points which support what he will next say –

- 1) Jesus is a “priest forever” (7:17);
- 2) He has “the power of an endless life” (7:16) rather than having His priesthood based on ancestry;
- 3) He is a priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:17) who was shown to be greater than Father Abraham (7:7);
- 4) Jesus’ priesthood annuls the laws of the former priesthood (7:18);
- 5) Jesus’ priesthood brings in “a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (7:19);
- 6) Jesus’ priesthood came with an oath (7:20);
- 7) Jesus himself has “become a surety of a better covenant” (7:22).

For these reasons, we can know for certain that “He is also able to save to the uttermost.” As Vincent’s Word Studies notes concerning this word, it is “not perpetually, but perfectly.” There is an absolute guarantee of salvation which comes through His infinitely superior priesthood. The power of the priesthood is absolute, and it is perfect in what it is set forth to accomplish. However, the

context must be understood. This saving is only for “those who come to God through Him.”

Jesus’ ministry as High Priest is the effective means of salvation. No one can expect a right relationship with God while attempting to circumvent Jesus. In a pluralistic society, this is rejected, but the Bible makes it perfectly clear that there is one way and one way alone that the human soul can find restoration and a fulfilled relationship with God, and that is only through Jesus. This is confirmed in His own words –

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” John 14:6

Sin exists in all men, and that sin must be dealt with before man can be reconciled to God. However, it is only through the intercessory role of Jesus Christ as High Priest that this can come about. In coming through Jesus, however, there is salvation to the uttermost because – as the author says – “He always lives to make intercession for them.” This takes the reader back to Chapter 5. Christ was chosen as a priest forever, and according to the order of Melchizedek. With that having been stated, the author then went on to explain what that meant for Him –

“...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”

In the ordeal Christ faced, He became the representative for all who would believe in Him. His prevailing through the sufferings He faced is what guarantees those who follow Him the same eternal life He possesses. Thus He is the “author of eternal salvation.” The tie which binds His priestly office and the salvation it provides is the intercessory role He fills on our behalf. The obedience He learned is what now carries through to our salvation in Him.

Life application: Only a true knucklehead would study theology, read Jesus' claims of exclusivity, and then think that God has made an exception in their case. Either Jesus' words are true or they aren't. If they are, then Jesus is the only path to God and all other paths lead to condemnation and hell. If they aren't true, then God has left man without the ability to truly know their eternal destiny. This would show a flaw in the nature of God – something which is impossible. Stand fast in your faith of Jesus and His great ministry and be assured that your faith in Him will be richly rewarded.

Thank You, O God, for the knowledge of salvation which is given to us through the Person and work of Your glorious Son – our Lord Jesus. Thank You also that we have a sure word that is reliable and effective in leading us to Him. We stand undeserving and yet confident! Amen.

For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;* Hebrews 7:26

The author just stated that Christ “is also able to save to the uttermost.” He then explained that with the words, “since he always lives to make intercession for them.” Now, he reveals the qualities that Christ possesses which make His saving of us to the uttermost possible. Understanding this, he begins with, “For such a High Priest was fitting for us.”

The implication is that anything less than what he will describe would render Christ unqualified to mediate for us. But because He possesses these qualities, He is wholly suited to the role of such a Mediator. The first quality is that He is “holy.”

The word used is not the same word used in verse 3:1 when speaking of the holy brethren to whom the epistle is written. Rather, it is a rare adjective which signifies something sanctioned by a higher (divine) law, and thus that which deserves godly respect. He is unaffected by the sin which weighs down Adam's

fallen race. There is no imperfection in our great High Priest and so His cross is completely able to remove our sin-debt once and for all.

The next word used is translated as “harmless.” It is a word used only here and in Romans 16:18. It signifies someone who is innocent even down to their very intentions. There is no desire at all to hurt or cause harm or grief in such a person. In Christ, there is no malice of thought. He doesn’t look at those who come to Him based on their past misdeeds, but on their acceptance of His accomplished work. Stated another way, His judgment concerning our salvation is not based on any negative thing we have done, but is based solely on the positive work that He has accomplished.

After this, He is described as “undefiled.” The word signifies “unstained,” and thus free from contamination. He is completely undefiled in thought, word, and deed. Because He is, His cleansing touch is able to purify us as well. When we call on Him in faith, He gives us His righteousness leading to holiness. At some glorious point in the future, we shall stand in the presence of God unaffected any longer by sin and its consequences.

He is also “separate from sinners.” It is debated if these words are connected to the previous word (undefiled), or to the following words (and has become higher than the heavens). Christ did, in fact, live among sinners as the gospels record, but He never participated in their sin. He remained wholly undefiled in His being. At the same time, He is now completely separated from us in this life. We are still in the fallen world, but He has gone into the heavens (which the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary represented) to minister for us. Because of this, it is probable that this is not specifically connected to either thought, but is a stand-alone thought which transitions between the two. He was separate, and He remains so now in another type of separation. Jesus is completely set apart from all defilement. This includes separation from those who have failed to call on Him. We cannot expect an eternal salvation for believers if we don’t expect eternal separation from unbelievers. God has given us the choice to choose life; to choose Jesus. If we neglect so great a salvation, only eternal condemnation can result.

The verse then ends with, “and has become higher than the heavens.” The thought is similar to that of Ephesians 4:10 –

“He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.”

The idea here is that His exaltation is higher than anything we can visibly see, and above any heaven we could ascend to. Thus, He sits at the right hand of God. In this, He can intercede directly to God on our behalf. The majesty of the heavens is nothing in comparison to the greatness of Jesus. We think of heaven as the ultimate prize, but the heavens were created along with the earth. The creation cannot equal the splendid majesty of the Creator, and heaven cannot match the glory of the Lord

In each of these, one can see the type which was given in the high priest of Israel as he mediated on the Day of Atonement. Christ is the Anti-type which corresponds to him, but in an infinitely more perfect way. What Israel’s high priest did under a law which could not save, Christ does through a covenant which can save to the uttermost.

Life application: If this verse doesn’t make you want to jump up and shout, you may need to get off the Xanax. When we come to Jesus we come to the very throne and glory of God. Think on who Jesus really is, and think on what He has really done. And then, go forth in praise of the splendor of His majesty!

Heavenly Father, help us never to set our eyes on any lesser prize than the ultimate glory – that of our precious, exalted, and magnificent Lord Jesus! Your word, again and again, admonishes us to fix our eyes, our thoughts, our hopes, and our hearts on Him. Give us the burning desire to do so. It is in His splendiferously wonderful name we pray! Amen.

...who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. Hebrews 7:27

This verse is a climax of the subject matter so far discussed over the past many verses concerning the superiority of Christ's priesthood over that of Aaron. The author has been clearly contrasting this superiority over that of the high priests of old. He has highlighted many differences such as in their duties, genealogies, and length of service, but this verse takes us directly back to the requirements of the Levitical law. For example, in Leviticus 16:11, this was stated concerning the high priest –

“And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which *is* for himself.”

Even the high priest himself had to offer sacrifices for sin. The Day of Atonement sacrifice was once a year, however, he also had other required sacrifices for his own sin, if and when any arose. This is in complete contrast to Christ Jesus. As was seen in the previous verse, He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” and thus requiring no sacrifice for His own sin. As the author says of Him, “who does not need daily” to offer up sacrifices. Unlike Christ who needed no sacrifice, the high priest of Israel needed sacrifices for sin which he committed.

The term, “daily,” does not mean that he literally offered a daily sacrifice for his sin. Rather, what is described in this verse is one which covers the conduct of his daily life. The Day of Atonement occurred once a year on the tenth day of the seventh month. It was a mandatory sacrifice which covered the entire year. On this day, “those high priests,” meaning those of the line of Aaron, were “to offer up sacrifices.” This was a ritual that only the high priest could conduct. When he did, he had to offer up “first for [h]is own sins.”

Note: The verse now being reviewed is looking at this from Christ Jesus' perspective, and so the word "His" is capitalized in this translation. However, this is given to show the contrast to that of Aaron. Christ did not have to offer up "for His own sins," but the high priest under the Law of Moses did.

After offering for his sins, the high priest could only then offer "for the people's" sins. This shows an inherent defect in the law. If the high priest had his own sin which required atonement, and that year by year, it shows that he was imperfect and he remained imperfect. Further, it shows that he could also not bring those, on whose behalf he ministered, to a state of perfection either. This is in complete contrast to Jesus who offered Himself, not a goat, and "this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

Here the superiority of Christ's priesthood is put on prominent display. A goat is in a different category than a man. Hebrews 10:4 will show that what the high priest of Israel did each year was actually ineffectual. As it says there, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." And so we have

- 1) the high priest requiring atonement for sin;
- 2) the high priest required atonement for sin "daily" (meaning year by year);
and
- 3) the offering for his sin could not actually take away the sin. In contrast, we have Jesus who
 - a. required no atonement for sin because He is sinless;
 - b. His sinless state is eternal and so He will never require atonement for His sin, making Him an acceptable offering for others who do bear sin; and

- c. the offering of Himself is fully sufficient to take away sin – once and for all – for those who trust in Him.

Life application: The people of Israel were granted a temporary covering (atonement) for their sins each year on the Day of Atonement. In reading the Old Testament, we find the most egregious sins possible being recorded by the people. And yet, if they came to God in faith on this most sacred day, God would atone for those sins. And these things only looked forward to the more perfect and complete atonement offered through Christ Jesus. Be comforted that nothing you've ever done is too vile that it can't be purified. When you look to the cross and accept what Jesus did on your behalf, you can never again be condemned for your wayward life. God has provided the ultimate atonement for you in the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Can we get an, "Amen!"

Glorious and most merciful God. You gave Israel temporary atonement, year by year, through the sacrifice of animals. But then You sent Jesus as a full, final, and forever sacrifice of Himself. In Him, we have the perfect sacrifice, and thus the perfect forgiveness for our wrongdoings. Thank You, O God, for Your unfailing love. It is evident in what You have done for us. Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. Hebrews 7:28

This is the final verse of Chapter 7. Before completing the chapter, the author provides another contrast between those high priests under the law and Jesus, the High Priest of the New Covenant. The previous verses showed other clear contrasts between the two as well. They were imperfect; He is perfect. They required a sacrifice for their own sins; He required no sacrifice, but instead became the perfect sacrifice. And further, His sacrifice was "once for all."

Now, the author finishes this thought with another such contrast. The law, meaning the Law of Moses, “appoints as high priests men who have weakness.” Although this may be referring to physical limitations, such as frailty or the ability to get sick and die, it is more certainly referring to their sin-nature and their inability to withstand temptation. In contrast, in Jesus, there is an oath rather than the mandate of the law. This oath “came after the law.” In other words, it sets aside the law entirely. This has already been stated, but the author is ensuring that we fully understand it. The Law of Moses is set aside by the entrance of the New Covenant.

This New Covenant appoints Jesus who “has been perfected forever.” As was noted before, this doesn’t mean Jesus went from a position of imperfection to one of perfection. Instead, He was and is the perfect, sinless, Son of God. What is perfected forever is our understanding of His perfection. Until Jesus died on the cross and was then raised to life, no one could have imagined His nature. He was thought to be merely a man who could be destroyed at the cross. But the very implement of His death became the point which confirms His perfection. By defeating the cross and being raised to life through the resurrection, all who realize the significance of what occurred can comprehend His perfection and eternity.

In this verse, the law is contrasted to the oath. The succession of high priests – coming, accomplishing their temporary duties, and then dying to be replaced by another – is contrasted to the Son who is forever. There is also the notion of the law coming, and then the oath coming afterward. As the oath came after the giving of the law, it means that the law must have an end. But as the oath speaks of “forever,” then the duties of the new High Priest are connected to His eternity. He is eternal, and His duties are forever.

Life application: It is Jesus who established the New Covenant (Matthew 26:28) in His own blood; it is Jesus who died on the cross, shedding that blood and satisfying the wrath of God; it is Jesus who was raised to eternal life; and it is Jesus who, even now, is at the right hand of the Father working on our behalf as we fall short of the law which He fulfilled. What perverse attitude would have someone go back to the Law of Moses and say, “Gee, I need to do the things of this law in

order to be right before God"? He has already done those things! All one does with this attitude is to reject what Christ has done. It is a cosmic slap in God's face. Stand on the grace of God which is found in Jesus Christ, and do not be led astray by false teachers who reintroduce an obsolete, annulled law.

Great are Your works, O Christ! Thank You for accomplishing that which no man has ever been able to do. In Your great mercy, You saved us from the debt we owe and from the curse of the law! No power of hell and no trick of the devil can ever steal us from Your magnificent salvation. All glory to You! Amen.

CHAPTER 8

Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, Hebrews 8:1

Chapter 8 now brings in the main point which has been, and which continues to be, discussed. As the author says, “of the things we are saying.” He continues to speak about the matter at hand, but he is giving the main point of the discussion so that the words he continues to relay will be more fully grasped. This main point is that “We have such a High Priest.”

All of the things which have been relayed about the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over that of Aaron are found in Jesus. In Chapter 7, point after point in regards to this was made. But those points were not merely hypothetical ruminations. Rather, they were points which actually are realized in the priesthood of Christ Jesus. The matter has been presented, it has been proven, and what has been said is considered as settled, even if more detail is forthcoming.

It is these types of considerations which are realized in this chief point. But his words do not end with the fact that Christ is such a High Priest. Instead, he continues with an explanation of that fact by saying, “who is seated.” Being an aorist verb, it is better translated as, “who sat down.” The author has referred to Psalm 110:1 twice so far in his thoughts (in verse 1:3 and in verse 1:13). The words of the psalm said,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

In verse 1:3, he even spoke of it as an accomplished act with the words about Christ Jesus which said He “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” That thought has been explained and fully substantiated, and it is now realized as

an indisputable truth concerning Him – He has sat down. But what is the significance of this act? It is explained by considering the actions of the priests under the Mosaic Covenant.

The majority of the furnishings and equipment mentioned in the construction of the tabernacle/temple are recorded in the book of Exodus. Nowhere was a chair authorized. This is true in both the tabernacle and later in the temple in Jerusalem. This is because the work of the priests was never finished. And this was true of all the priests, including the high priest. This continued on daily, and there was a tremendous amount of work to be accomplished as people came to sacrifice, again and again, for their sins. The high priest also conducted his ongoing duties as well. There is no time that the Law of Moses ever implied that the work would finally be finished and the rituals would cease. Rather, that could only come about through introduction of a New Covenant.

In contrast, Jesus performed His duty (His sacrifice), presented His blood, and sat down. The work is eternally finished! Not only did Jesus sit down, but He did it at “the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.” Though He actively makes intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25), that is an act which is based on His finished work. Christ is not performing necessary rituals in order to effect atonement for His believers. Those things have been accomplished. Now, He does the things for us which are made possible through His completed work of atonement.

Life application: Because it is said that Jesus sat down at the “right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” some will say this indicates a separation between the Father and the Son, thus denying the Trinity. But, the “right hand” is not a physical position; it is the position of all authority. This is seen, for example, in Exodus 15:6 –

“Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power;
Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces.”

Being at the right hand of God means that Jesus is the One who has all authority in heaven and on earth. The Godhead is three Persons in one Essence. Christ is a

member of that Godhead. We are to accept the Trinity as a fundamental truth concerning the nature of God.

Jesus sat down! His work is complete and never to be repeated. Our Lord will never again face the agony of the cross, and we need never again fear that our failings will separate us from God. In Christ Jesus, we are eternally secure. His blood has taken our guilt away! Hallelujah and Amen!

...a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. Hebrews 8:2

Here we have words which are debated among scholars. Further, translations are just as confusing concerning the proper rendering of certain words. First, the thought in this verse is connected to the previous verse, so they should be seen together –

“Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ²a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.”

We see now that Christ is “a Minister.” In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word is often used when speaking of an officiating priest. Corresponding to that, Christ is our High Priest. It is He who officiates on our behalf. Next, it says that this ministry is “of the sanctuary.” The Greek word is a plural noun. It can speak of either a place, meaning the Most Holy Place, or it can speak of the holy things of the tabernacle. In the case of the Most Holy Place, the plural is given as a majestic plural, so some translations say “the Holy of Holies.” It is a title of eminence.

It is the Most Holy Place which is being spoken of here, rather than the holy things. In the Old Testament, there was a *mishkan*, or tabernacle, which was then

covered by the Tent of Meeting. The two are not synonymous. Christ is a minister of the tabernacle where the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place are located. And that is where the “true tabernacle” is. Again, there is a missing of the true intent. It should say, “the true Tent.” The Greek word is *skéné*. It signifies a tent. Translations of the Old Testament are often not consistent in the translations of these two things, and so there is a confusion when coming into New Testament terminology. Remembering that the Tent covers the Tabernacle will help one understand the symbolism. One can think of the Oval Office in the White House as the tabernacle, and the White House itself as the tent. One is inside the other.

What is seen in the Old is a representation of what was coining in Christ. It pictures His two natures; humanity and deity. The tabernacle was hidden from sight, enclosed in the tent. Christ’s deity was hidden, enclosed in His humanity. At times, such as in Numbers 14, the radiance of His deity would shine forth –

“And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting unto all the children of Israel.” Numbers 14:10 (ERV)

This is akin to the glory of the Lord radiating out from Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. And so what we are seeing here is the ministry of Christ, in the heavenly realms. He is the minister within the Godhead (His deity) which is in His Tent (meaning His glorified body) “which the Lord erected, and not man.” Though Christ’s humanity came through Man, what He now ministers in is glorified and not an earthly body. This is what is also promised to those who follow after Him as is noted by Paul –

“For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 2 Corinthians 5:1

There, Paul uses the term *skénos*, a tent. Our house shall be a tent which is, like Jesus, not made with hands, but is provided for by God. It will be an eternal dwelling where we can fellowship with God, because of Christ, forever.

All of this symbolism is derived from shadows and pictures in the Old Testament concerning what was coming in Christ in the New. We can only speculate on the nature of the meeting which took place in the Most Holy Place between Moses and the Lord when he went in to receive the law. However, we can know certain things. In Exodus 25, the Lord told Moses –

“And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”
Exodus 25:22

Then, in Numbers 7 we read –

“And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with him, then he heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim: and he spake unto him.”
Numbers 7:89 (ERV)

Also in Exodus, we read this –

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” Exodus 40:34, 35 (ERV)

God really did manifest Himself between the cherubim which overshadowed the ark. There He spoke with Moses directly. Later, His presence really was manifest in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle – so much so that Moses could not enter the tent at all. God’s presence was manifest at only a small point above the ark, and yet His glory radiated so much that it made Moses’ face shine, and it also actually overwhelmed the priests who ministered in the temple in Jerusalem (see

1 Kings 8:10, 11). Imagine the glory which radiates from the heavenly tabernacle where Christ Jesus now ministers on our behalf.

Life application: Understanding theology properly is hard work. It is mentally tiring at times, but it is necessary to understand what is being said. Very particular words are used in books like Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. They are words which are often mistranslated. They are also left unread and unstudied by many people, and so we then have misunderstandings of what is going on in the New when explanations about Christ are given. But those explanations, as we see, bear directly on what we will also be like when we receive our glorified bodies. Too often, people run ahead with their notions about our future state, and they miss the finer points which are actually discussed in type and shadow in the Old Testament. Be studious, pay attention to even the hard books of Scripture, and your doctrine will be far better off because of it.

How absolutely awesome You are, O God of eternity! We truly praise You for Jesus – He alone is able to stand and minister in Your glorious presence, interceding for us. On our own, we would simply perish at the sight of Your Majesty. Surely, You are worthy of praise for the giving of Christ Jesus so that we could have Your glory revealed to us through Him, while He ministers to You for us! Hallelujah and Amen.

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.* Hebrews 8:3

For the next several verses, the author will again demonstrate the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old using impeccable logic. What he says here, beginning with this verse, is to clarify what has just been presented. The word

“For” is given to show this. He is logically presenting another sure proof of the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over that of Aaron.

He said in verse 8:1 that in Jesus we have a High Priest “who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” In verse 8:2, he then said that He is “a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.”

The significance of this is that what was found in the Old Covenant here on earth was simply a type of what was to come in Christ. That will be stated explicitly in verse 8:5. But the fact is, whether type or not, there was an earthly tabernacle (and later temple) and there was a priesthood set up for it. As a descendant of Judah, and not of Levi through Aaron, Jesus could not minister in such an earthly sanctuary (see verses 7:13, 14).

As this is so, He would have nothing to offer at the earthly altar. As it says, “For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.” It is the high priest, on behalf of the people, who make such offerings. Some are for atonement, some are for burnt offerings, some are as peace offerings, and so on.

However, the same must be true of the heavenly tabernacle. If the earthly tabernacle is ministered to by Aaron and his sons, and since there is a heavenly tabernacle, of which the earthly tabernacle is only a type, then there must be someone to minister at that heavenly edifice, and he must have something to offer. But Aaron cannot be the minister because no such appointment has been made for him to do so. Therefore, there must be One who is given that responsibility. As has already been seen, that appointment was for Christ Jesus, and it was based on an oath given in Psalm 110. With this understanding, the author then says, “Therefore.” He is saying, “based on what has been presented, then what I say next logically follows.”

From there, he says, “*it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.*” If there is a heavenly edifice, and if there is a High Priest who ministers at that, then He logically must also have something to offer because “every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices.”

Key to understanding this is what it says in verse 8:5. Though getting ahead in thought, if Moses said there is a “pattern” upon which the earthly things are fashioned, then the heavenly pattern is the substance of which the earthly is merely a type or shadow. As this is recorded in the writings of Moses, this must be the case. If the earthly required gifts and sacrifices, and if the earthly was fashioned after a pattern, then the heavenly must logically require both gifts and sacrifices. This then is the author’s explanation of verse 5:1 –

“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”

From there, the exact nature of those gifts and sacrifices in the heavenly tabernacle will be described, in detail, in Chapter 9.

Life application: Key to understanding what the author is saying in Hebrews is to have an understanding of what he is referring to from the Old Testament. The author is not simply making things up as he goes. Rather, he is using the law itself to show us that the things of the law were actually ineffectual types that could not actually accomplish what they were laid out to do. They were shadows awaiting their fulfillment in the substance, which is found in Christ. To not read and study the books of Moses, and the rest of the Old Testament writings, leaves the believer in Christ with a vast void in actually being able to piece together what is being relayed for our understanding. The truly sad state of many believers is that they either do not progress in theology at all, or they get their theology not from the Bible itself, but from other’s commentaries on it. That is a scary place to be. Unless you know what the Bible already says, you are taking the word of someone, who may be utterly deficient in their theology, to make the most important decisions of all.

Lord God, we look back on the work of Jesus and are fully aware of the offering He gave on our behalf – His own precious life. May we never forget the awesome and yet terrible cost of our freedom from sin and the power of the devil. All glory to the name of Jesus! Amen.

For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; Hebrews 8:4

Again, the author begins with “For.” One thought builds upon the next to establish his case. He has just stated that the purpose of a priest is “to offer both gifts and sacrifices.” He then said, based on that thought, that it is “necessary that this One also have something to offer.” What he is saying concerning the Levitical priesthood is that they, in fact, had something to offer. This begins to be realized with the words, “For if He were on earth.”

The “He” is referring to Jesus. Jesus was obviously here on earth, so the author isn’t talking as if His incarnation didn’t really occur. Rather, what did occur, and which is the focus of the author’s words now, is speaking about the earthly sanctuary of the Old Covenant. He is not concerned with any other religions which also conduct priestly functions, as if “on earth” was speaking of whatever religion man conjures up. Rather, his words are directed to only that which the Lord established. Under the Old Covenant, which has been seen to be a type of that which is in heaven and which will be seen explicitly in verse 8:5, Jesus “would not be a priest.”

The earthly sanctuary was designated specifically for the priestly line of Aaron. Further, the earthly sanctuary had specific gifts and sacrifices meticulously prescribed for its service. The types of gifts and sacrifices, how to offer them, when to offer them, what to do with each and every part of them after they have been sacrificed, etc. have all been minutely detailed within the law itself. Everything necessary to fulfill the Lord’s will under the Old Covenant is provided

through the words of the covenant itself. This is why the author continues with the words, “since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law.”

There were priests according to the law, and these priests offered the gifts mandated by the law. Further, they offered them according to the law. Nothing is left for another to come in and fulfill a priestly task which was lacking. Every part of the system, upon which the Levitical priesthood was established, is carefully detailed in the written words of instruction found in the law itself.

This specificity of those details goes on for pages and pages (and pages!) in the Law of Moses, covering every possible situation. The priest then could follow these procedures exactly. If Jesus’ ministry was only an earthly ministry, it would be a false one. The Levites already handled what was prescribed in the law at the place God chose for the priestly ministry of Israel.

Life application: If Jesus’ ministry is a valid one, as it is shown to be based on the explanation of the previous chapters, and if that ministry is not of this earth, then it must be a heavenly ministry. If the earthly ministry of the Levitical priesthood dealt with earthly things, then the heavenly ministry of Christ Jesus must deal with spiritual things. The earthly things are already handled by the Old Covenant, and they were ineffective for bringing man to a restored relationship with God. As this is so, and as the ministry of Christ is able to do this, then why (why on earth!) would anyone want to go back to a law which was incapable of restoring us to God. Think it through.

What is earthly is

- 1) temporary,
- 2) ineffective, and
- 3) annulled in Christ.

Stay far away from anyone who would ask you to return to precepts of such a failed system. Stand on the grace of Jesus Christ alone for your reconciliation to God the Father.

Heavenly Father, it is with thanks and gratitude that our sacrifice came not in the sacrificial system at an earthly sanctuary, and through the blood of bulls and goats. Instead, it came through the life of the precious Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus. We look to His glorious work and know that His greater ministry is sufficient to cover all our transgressions. Glory and honor to You! Amen.

... who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”
Hebrews 8:5

The previous verse acknowledged that the Levitical priesthood had priests who offered “gifts according to the law.” Because of this, Jesus couldn’t be a priest under that covenant – He is from the tribe of Judah, not Levi. It was the line of Aaron from the tribe of Levi which was set apart to minister and offer the appropriate sacrifices. But David said a priest would come according to the order of Melchizedek – one with an eternal priesthood and with none of the imperfections of the Levitical priests.

The term “foreshadowing” is one used of types and figures in the Old Testament. This is the case with both the tabernacle and its contents as is noted in this verse. The author says that these Levitical priests “serve the copy and a shadow of the heavenly things.” (Side note: there is no article in front of “copy” in the Greek. It thus more rightly says, “a copy and shadow.”)

The word “copy” signifies a model or an example. It is not identical to the original, but it is something patterned after it. The word “shadow” means exactly that. It is an outline without any substance in and of itself. There is nothing about it which conveys the reality of the original. Indeed, if the original did not exist, the shadow would not exist. With this understanding, the author continues with, “as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle.”

Moses was told this by the Lord in Exodus 25:9 and again in Exodus 25:40. The word translated as “divinely instructed” signifies to utter as an oracle. Thus God revealed to Moses what was to be accomplished, and how it was to be done. This divine instruction is then cited by the author from Exodus 25 with the words, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

As Moses was shown the pattern, then that means what he is making is only a mere representation of that. That then is the true sanctuary and the true tabernacle mentioned in Hebrews 2:2. The earthly tabernacle was nothing more than a copy and shadow of the reality found in heaven. What Moses was shown on the mountain, meaning Mount Sinai, was to be copied and made into a place for the priests of the covenant to minister at.

The word the author uses for “pattern” is *tupos*. It is where we get our modern word “type” from. It is a model based on a reliable precedent which is then closely followed. That is what the earthly sanctuary is, a type based on an original. With this understanding, it should be noted that Paul describes the dietary restrictions, festivals, other days of observance, and Sabbath days of ancient Israel in the same way as the author describes this patterned sanctuary. They are mere shadows –

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” Colossians 2:16, 17

These things mentioned by Paul, and which are based on the law itself, were given until the time of Christ; their fulfillment is in Him. The sanctuary, the Tent of Meeting, the tabernacle, the ark with its mercy seat, all of the other contents within the tabernacle, and indeed all rites and observances associated with these things, are simply pictures of Christ. Each pictures Him, and each finds its fulfillment in Him. As this is so, then all are set aside in His work.

Life application: If you are in a denomination which mandates a Sabbath Day, the observance of a particular festival, or any part of the Law of Moses, please know that these were fulfilled by Him on your behalf. You have freedom in Christ – you are not tied to such facets of worship. They could never justify you before God. Put your faith and trust in Christ alone and God will be pleased to call you His precious child.

Lord God, you have taken away such heavy chains from our lives – chains of condemnation for sin, chains of the law and its strict mandates, and chains of insecurity about the future, including what happens after our death. With such weight removed from our souls, it's a wonder we don't just fly away! And indeed, some glorious day we will. Glory to You, O God, for our Lord Jesus! Amen.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.
Hebrews 8:6

The author has consistently treated subjects while demonstrating the superiority of Christ's Person, work, and ministry over that of other comparable subjects. This has been seen, for example, in verses 1:4, 3:3, and 7:22. Once again, he has built a case for the superiority of the ministry of Christ, and of the covenant in which He operates. Having done so, he states the matter as such by beginning with, "But now."

The words are in response to verse 8:3, which said, “For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer.” However, those words were only given in support of other thoughts presented earlier. For example, he spoke specifically of the introduction of this new priesthood in 7:11-18. He then noted the concept of the “better covenant” in verse 7:22. With these thoughts introduced, he then explained them, pointing out how what Christ did was, in fact, superior. And so this verse now is making a summary statement of those facts. He has shown the fault in the Old, and now he relays the surety of the New. With this in mind, he says, “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry.”

What the line of Aaron did was at the direction of the Lord, and for the purpose of ministering for the people of Israel in a priestly fashion. In the accomplishment of this, a state of harmony between the people and the Lord should have been realized. But this never occurred. Even from the earliest days of the law, there was (and continued to be) strife between the people and the Lord.

In the case of the people failing to be obedient, it then became necessary for the high priest to mediate on the people’s behalf, petitioning for mercy. This was done through the sacrificial system, and especially on the Day of Atonement. However, as has been seen, and as will continue to be seen, this mediation was temporary and only as effective as it pointed to the coming Christ. Outside of that, it accomplished nothing permanent. However, concerning Jesus, His ministry is more excellent “inasmuch as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant.”

The better nature of the covenant was explained in verses 7:20-21 (and elsewhere). It was established based on an oath, it is an eternal priesthood, and it is able to save those under it to the uttermost (among other things). Finally, the author finishes the verse with the thought that this covenant was “established on better promises.” The word translated as “established,” was introduced in verse 7:11, and now this is its second and last use in Scripture. It signifies “to ordain by law.” When Moses received the law, the Mosaic Covenant was so established. With the coming of Christ, the New Covenant is likewise so established. These are legally established covenants which convey the will of God, and the means of propitiation between God and man.

The “better promises” of the New Covenant will be specified in the coming verses, especially verses 8:8 through 8:12. With those stated, he will sum up the thought with another explicit statement concerning the replacement of the Old by the New in verse 8:13.

Life application: In the words of Hebrews, the author is clearly and precisely detailing how the New Covenant is superior to, and how it has replaced, the Old. Its High Priest and Mediator is superior in all ways. In fact, Paul says in 1 Timothy that “*there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” The promises on which Jesus’ ministry are based are also superior – they are on oath from God and are eternal in their scope and nature. In understanding these things, we can then understand why the author of Hebrews is writing this epistle. It is to implore the believer in Christ to not return to the Old Covenant. It is as if he is begging his people to think clearly. And so we must. Rest, O Christian, in the work of Jesus!

Lord God, the repetition of the precepts found in the New Covenant is gratefully accepted. Because of conflicting data from so many sources on what is and what is not applicable to Christian life, it is good to hear the same thought stated again and again in Your word in different ways. Thank You for solidifying our faith in Christ alone, apart from works of the law. Amen.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Hebrews 8:7

In the previous verse, the author had contrasted the ministry of the Old Covenant to that of the new by saying of Jesus, “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”

Now, concerning that “better covenant,” he says, “For.” He is building a logical case against observing the Law of Moses. He desires his audience, once and forever, to come to the grace of God which is found in Jesus Christ’s New Covenant. In order to do this, he continues by saying, “For if that first *covenant* had been faultless.” The statement demands the reader to acknowledge that it is, in fact, found to be with fault.

After all the discussion about the New Covenant setting aside the Old (meaning in its entirety), the author states what is evident from everything he has thus far said – that, because of its inherent weakness, a New Covenant was needed. The weaknesses are obvious:

- 1) The priests were sin-filled men just like all of Adam’s seed.
- 2) The law could make no one perfect, but rather it showed concerning sin (as Paul says), “that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful” (Romans 7:13).
- 3) The tabernacle and later the temple were corruptible and transitory. In fact, after the tabernacle was replaced with Solomon’s Temple, that was destroyed by the Babylonians. Then another temple was built which was destroyed by the Romans.
- 4) The sacrifices of the temple were imperfect and could never truly atone for human sin.

For these and other reasons, another covenant was needed. As he says, if the first covenant didn’t have fault (which it is proven that it does), “then no place would have been sought for a second.” However, a second covenant was sought. It is explicitly stated in Jeremiah 31, which will be cited in the coming verses. This covenant would be perfect in nature along with everything associated with it.

As an example, let us consider another aspect of the Old Covenant which was lacking in its nature – the office of prophet. Even the prophets who lived and prophesied under the law were sinful men. They spoke the words of God, but their utterances usually accompanied some type of claim, such as, “Thus says the Lord...” It wasn’t until the New Covenant that One came and spoke on His own authority –

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:2, 28

This same One, who spoke under His own authority, also proclaimed that He was the One to establish the promised New Covenant –

“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you.’²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matthew 26:17, 28

Life application: In Hebrews 1:1, the claim was made that God once spoke in certain ways, but now has spoken through His Son. In other words, what is recorded in the Bible is sealed and nothing can be added to it. Jesus has spoken. His apostles were granted authority to record their testimony of Him and to clarify the meaning of this New Covenant. Therefore, No other word is authoritative beyond the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The author wants his audience to never go back under the Old Covenant which was faulty. However, we can implicitly see that the New Covenant, though on-going in nature, is fully explained in Scripture. No further revelation is needed, nor is it to be expected. When someone in a church says, “The Lord says,” except as a quote from Scripture, it’s time to find another church. Hold fast to the Bible, and to that alone.

O God of the Universe! You have honored us by granting us Your word, the Holy Bible. It points to Jesus, tells us of Jesus, and explains Jesus' ministry to us. What more could we ever need? But even then, You've given us of Your Spirit to allow us to understand and accept the wonderful message it contains. Glory and honor belong to You! Amen.

Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— Hebrews 8:8

The author now continues on with the thought just presented in verse 8:7. There he said, "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second." The first (Mosaic) covenant was not faultless, as is confirmed in the words, "Because finding fault with them." It is important to understand the wording. The author does not say, "Because finding fault with it." There was fault under the Mosaic Covenant, but it was not in the law itself. Rather, it was in the people bound under it. Sin in man made it impossible for anyone under the law to be perfected. This includes both original sin and committed sin. The defect is in man, not in the law itself. This is why Paul says –

"What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' ⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. ⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. ¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*. ¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." Romans 7:7-12

The Old Covenant was perfect in its intent and purpose – to demonstrate that no one can be justified by attempting to adhere to it. The fault isn't with the Covenant then, but rather with the people who were unable to meet its perfect demands. The law's standards flow from God's perfect character and only more poignantly show our imperfections. God knew this, but we didn't. How could we appreciate Jesus? How could we appreciate God's infinite mercy? How could we appreciate the perfection of God's plan without first being given the law? It's no different than feeling healthy. If we felt healthy all the time, we would never truly appreciate health. But when we get sick, we can appreciate our health more. In fact, the sicker we are, the more we can then appreciate true health. Jesus used this terminology even as He was fulfilling the law on our behalf –

“When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what *this* means: *‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’* For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Mark 9:12, 13

Because of this fault, the author then writes, “He says.” This is speaking of the Lord. The law could not accomplish the task of restoring fallen man to Him. This was already known by Him to be the case, but the law was given as a tutor to help us understand our need for something greater (Galatians 3:24, 25). When the lesson was learned, and in the fullness of time, God sent Christ to fulfill the law and to establish a New Covenant. To support this, he goes to Scripture and cites Jeremiah 31:31 with the words, “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”

If the people were simply given God's healing without realizing their sickness, it would have no effect in their lives. But once a law was given, the people learned, as if tutored, about the need to come to Christ's perfection for our healing and restoration.

But something is stated in Jeremiah 31:31 which is surprisingly missed by replacement theologians. Who did this New Covenant go to? It went to the house of Israel and the house of Judah; to those who had lived under its yoke and who could appreciate the freedom it provided. This New Covenant was given to Israel and Judah. As they went into punishment for rejecting Christ, the church illogically decided that they must be "Israel." The promises had been made, the Gentiles had received them, and so the church must now be "Israel." With this logic, much of the body of the Old Testament had to be spiritualized because it is literally impossible for those prophecies to be fulfilled in the church in an actual way. This great error continues on in the minds of replacement theologians to this day.

However, it was only after the New Covenant in Christ was first presented to Israel, and through the instructive hands of the apostles, that the gospel came to the Gentiles. Paul's letters show how the Gentiles are grafted into this body, but they did not replace it. His letters also clearly show how, in the future, Israel will again be brought into the New Covenant as a collective people. Peter says as much in his statements in Acts. It is, actually, inexcusable that the church has developed the doctrine of replacement theology. The covenant is made, it was made with Israel and Judah, and the church is not Israel nor Judah. In the future, the covenant will be realized in them. Coming soon to a millennial reign of Christ near you.

Now, during the Dispensation of Grace, all can look back on Israel's years under the law and see the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus. The law was given, it was intended to lead us to Christ, and it is not an end in and of itself.

Life application: The church did not replace Israel.

O God! All the difficult work of meeting Your perfect standards was accomplished by Your own right arm – in the Person and work of Jesus. We can now rest in His perfection and, by faith alone, receive complete healing and restoration with You. And so, we give thanks to You! Amen!

...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

Hebrews 8:9

This verse is a continuation of the quote from Jeremiah 31; it is a general quote of verse 32. God made a covenant with the people He brought out of slavery in Egypt. In Genesis 12, God made an oath to Abraham that He would bless him and make him into a great nation. In Genesis 15, He swore an oath by Himself that He would complete the promise just as He had said. God told Abraham at this time –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-16

As the Bible shows, everything concerning the promise and Israel’s subsequent delivery from bondage was accomplished by God. After delivering Israel, the Mosaic covenant was given to the people, but the people were unfaithful to it, even from its inception. After enough disobedience, God turned away from the people and exiled them to Babylon. However, even in their disobedience, God promised them a New Covenant.

And so, the words, “not according to the covenant,” are speaking of the contrasting nature of the New Covenant that would be given (prophesied at Jeremiah’s time, but which is given in Christ). The nature of this New Covenant will be more fully explained in the words to come. However, the very fact that it says this New Covenant will not be according to the Old Covenant, by default, means that the Old Covenant is obsolete (a point he will explicitly state in verse 8:13) because, once a covenant is given, it cannot be changed. If the New is not according to the Old, it – by its very nature – replaces the Old.

The Old Covenant was one, as the verse next says, “that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.” Before the covenant was made, the people lived under the time of Promise. That was from Abraham until the exodus. After the exodus, the people were given the Law at Mount Sinai. This became the time of Instruction (the meaning of the Hebrew word *torah* is “instruction”), also known as the Dispensation of Law. As Paul says in Galatians 3, this time of Law was a tutor (a pedagogue) intended to lead to Christ.

God led Israel by the hand out of Egypt, and the time of Law (Instruction) was to continue leading Israel by the hand, just as a pedagogue would do for a child through administering discipline. Despite this, the citation of Jeremiah 31 continues on by saying, “because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.” Israel failed to receive the instruction which the law provided, and the law was unable to perfect the people. Eventually, the punishments of the law were inflicted upon the people because of this. That is seen in the words, “and I disregarded them.” Here the quote is from the Greek translation of Jeremiah 31. The Hebrew text reads differently. Instead of these words, it says, “though I was a husband to them.” The idea is that, despite being a husband, he cast them off for their disobedience and faithlessness. But even that did not correct the people.

Everything recorded about Israel in the Old Testament concerning this Old Covenant demonstrated that the Law was incapable of bringing about what it was intended to bring about, which was a restored relationship with God. Because of this demonstrable failure, a new Covenant was sought out which would correct the deficiency of the Old. However, when a covenant is made, it must stand. The only way that a New Covenant could come about would be in the fulfillment of the Old. As the imperfection of the people was the deficiency which kept the Old from being successful, a perfect Person would need to come in order for success to be realized. This is what God did in Christ. Through Him, a new and better arrangement could be made for the restoration of man to his Creator.

Life application: When we are faithless, God is ever faithful. Remember this as you struggle with sin. He sent His Son to take your punishment if you will only trust Him. How splendid is God from whom all blessings flow!

O God, even when we disobey and rebel, You remain ever-faithful. When Israel disobeyed and deserved destruction, you preserved them and even promised a New Covenant to them; a covenant guaranteed by the precious blood of Jesus. How can we neglect so great a salvation and remain guiltless? All glory surely belongs to You! Amen.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Hebrews 8:10

In this verse, the author closely cites Jeremiah 31:33. The words begin with, “For this is the covenant that I will make.” The Greek literally reads, “For this is the covenant that I will covenant.” The word translated as “I will covenant” is a different word than that used in verse 8:8. There, it was more akin to, “I will ratify,” and it “focuses on the ‘end-point’ of two or more related factors working together to reach their fulfillment” (HELPS Word Studies). Here, the word signifies, to “*thoroughly* (carefully) arrange which effectively accomplishes the objective at hand” (HELPS Word Studies).

According to the verse, this New Covenant will be “with the house of Israel after those days.” It should be noted that in verse 8:8 it said, “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” Here, there is a uniting of the two into one unit once again. A covenant is something made between two parties. And so here we have an interesting look into what has happened in redemptive history. Christ confirmed the covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but that covenant has not actually been “covenanted” with them yet. They rejected Him and were in turn rejected. That is why it says, “after those days.” There is a time when the house of Israel and the house of Judah would again be considered one

house. That has happened. Israel has returned to the land, and they have become one united people – Israel.

Despite having rejected Christ, and despite having been rejected by Him during a time of punishment, there is a time which is promised when they will again be brought back and brought into this covenant which was ratified in His shed blood. This is promised, and it is guaranteed in the words, “says the Lord.” He has spoken, and He will bring it to pass. At that time, He says that “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts.”

Note that the word “mind” is singular – it is a collective mind of the people upon which His laws will be placed. However, the word “hearts” is plural. The hearts of all within the collective will have His laws written upon them. This clearly establishes that the Lord is speaking of a collective body which is made up of individuals. It is a precept which must be understood to grasp the significance of the author’s words in the book of Hebrews. The Lord has not permanently rejected Israel the nation. Any individual can come to Him now and be saved, but the collective is not yet saved. Someday, the two will be in one accord. National Israel will be saved. Understanding this, the Lord continues by saying, “and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

The Lord, meaning Jesus – who ratified the New Covenant in His blood – will be recognized and acknowledged as their God. That is prophesied by Jesus explicitly in Matthew 23 when He said to the people –

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Matthew 23:37-39

Someday, as prophesied by Jesus, He will return to Israel (Jerusalem symbolizes the leadership of Israel, and thus the national proclamation of Israel) and they will acknowledge Him as LORD, meaning YHVH – the Lord God of Israel.

By citing this verse, and stating it was with the “house of Israel,” people over the centuries have confused Israel with the church, a doctrine known as “replacement theology.” Because God made certain promises in the Old Testament to Israel which never came about, and because Israel disappeared from the scene as a nation, the church unwisely assumed that the church replaced Israel and that those unfulfilled promises would now be realized in the church. However, as is often the case with unfulfilled prophecy, these people were wrong. The church did not replace Israel. The church age is a separate dispensation in God’s economy. Paul could not be any clearer in chapters 9-11 of Romans that God is not through with Israel and never does he confuse the two by claiming they are a single entity. In fact, the very verses which replacement theologians use to support their case actually refute it, such as –

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28

When Paul speaks in this verse of “neither Jew nor Greek,” and that they are one, he is confirming a distinction between the two. It’s obvious that males and females are not the same; no normal person would ever make such a claim. Being one in Christ is not the same as having no distinction in identity. Therefore, the Gentiles are not, as replacement theologians claim, the Jews. Logically also, the church is also not Israel. Rather, at the end of the current dispensation, God’s attention will again be focused on the restored nation of Israel. This will occur at the rapture of the church.

In the words, “and they shall be my people,” there is a clue to the dispensational model. Israel was called the Lord’s people, but in their rejection of Him, He chose a new people – the Gentile-led church. Paul cites Hosea in Romans 9, stating the church is God’s people. However, Israel will again be called “My people” by the

Lord. This is confirmed in Peter's words which cite Hosea again, applying them to Israel.

During the time of Israel's exile for disobedience, there has been a time of God's favor upon the Gentile world. The precedent has been set in Israel and therefore it can, and does, apply to those who are not Israel as well. The interesting thing for people alive in this day is that Israel as a nation has been re-gathered to the land of Israel. The "times of the Gentiles" is now coming to its close.

As a confirmation of these things, and as if opening up a treasure of beautiful gems, the passage Paul refers to in Hosea is marked with a special pattern known as a chiasm. This pattern shows the contrast of rejection and acceptance by God. A chiasm is a pattern which states a truth and then turns around and restates it in the opposite order. Sometimes, such as in the case of this one in Hosea, the pattern says the opposite as it unfolds, thus it is a chiasm of contrasts –

Hosea 1:9-2:23 - "But Me she forgot," says the LORD.

A Chiasm of Contrasts - Our Unfaithfulness and God's Unlimited Mercy (11/23/07)

- a. 1:9 You are not my people, I will not be your God.
- b. 1:10 Jezreel (God will sow)
- c. 2:3 Dry Land, thirst.
- d. 2:5 Wife departs from her husband.
- e. 2:7 Wife returns to her husband.
- f. 2:9 Take away the new wine.
- g. 2:10-12 God punishes Israel.
- h. 2:13 God will punish her.
 - x. 2:13 "But Me she forgot," says the LORD
- h. 2:14a God will allure her.
- g. 2:14b God comforts Israel.
- f. 2:15 Give vineyards.
- e. 2:16 LORD says, "That you will call me 'My Husband.'"
- d. 2:19 Husband betroths wife.
- c. 2:21, 22 Grain, new wine, oil.
- b. 2:22 Jezreel (God will sow)
- a. 2:23 You are my people; You are my God.

As can be seen, there is God's rejection of Israel, their punishment for being rejected, and then a return of the husband/wife relationship to Israel. During the time when He says, "they are not My people," Paul says that the Gentiles are His people. This verse in Hebrews, citing the words of the Lord through Jeremiah, show very clearly that Israel is not forever rejected by God. He still has a plan and a purpose for them.

Life application: Though the Gentiles were once out of the picture, there were still hints of God's love for them – Ruth for example. And though the Jews rejected Christ, God has not wholly given up on them. He will again call them as a people to Himself, thus demonstrating that He truly is a God of grace and mercy.

You are the everlasting, covenant-keeping, and most glorious God! Thank you that despite our misinterpretations of Scripture, our salvation is secure in Christ and not lost in faulty doctrine. However, help our doctrine to be pure, so that You will be glorified through it. Amen!

None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

Hebrews 8:11

This verse now quotes Jeremiah 31:34. In this, there is a difference between some Greek manuscripts. The word for “neighbor” is found to rather say “fellow citizen.” That is probably the true rendering. The Hebrew from which it is cited says, “neighbor.” But a neighbor may not necessarily be a fellow citizen in today’s world. The difference in the Greek manuscripts probably came about when someone later tried to match the words to the Hebrew, thinking they were helping the translation along.

Assuming it says *polités*, or citizen, would then follow in accord with the thought which has thus far been presented. Israel had rejected Christ as a cumulative whole. However, a time is coming when, “None of them shall teach his ‘fellow citizen.’” The idea is the same as from the Hebrew Scriptures because the Hebrew was speaking to Israel through a Hebrew person concerning things which would again pertain to them. However, to say, “fellow citizen,” means that the Gentile led church is to understand that this only applies to the Hebrew people. The rest of the world has already been presented Christ during Israel’s rejection of Him. It is then a note that Israel will someday finally catch up to proper theology concerning Christ.

The verse continues with, “and none his brother.” The word is a standard one meaning a literal brother, but it can extend to a fellow believer in Christ. The idea again, however, is directed to the Hebrew people, just as the entire epistle is. There will be no need for a Hebrew (who believes, such as the Messianic believers today) to teach a fellow citizen, or a brother, about Christ, saying, “Know the Lord.”

What is implied, and a point which has already been brought forth, is that there is a time when the house of Israel would be in a state of unbelief. For those believing individuals within this body, there is a need for them to teach their fellow citizens (neighbors), and their own brothers, to know the Lord, meaning Jesus. The nation has all but rejected Him, minus a faithful remnant (see Romans 11:1-5). That faithful remnant has called out for their brothers to “know the Lord,” but it has fallen on deaf ears. But that will no longer be the case someday, because the Lord says, “all shall know Me.”

The words, if logically thought through, cannot apply to the Gentiles now. Replacement theology must set aside the obvious nature of what is said in order to apply them to the world today. However, 1) not all Gentiles “know the Lord,” and 2) those Gentiles who know the Lord do not need to know the Lord. The “duh” nature of what is being conveyed here makes the idea of replacement theology a completely irrational system. But properly applying these words to Israel (meaning the people Israel, not Gentiles who claim they have replaced Israel) shows that someday all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26) and all of them will know the Lord, “from the least of them to the greatest of them.” Christ Jesus will be known to all of them. It will be as universal in their minds as is the fact that they are Israel.

Unfortunately, this verse is often misunderstood or misapplied in a believer’s life. Taking this one verse out of context leads naturally to the assumption that important aspects of Christian maturity, such as dedicated Bible study, formal Bible schooling, etc., are unimportant. Charismatics believe they have a direct infusion of the Spirit which makes them fully knowledgeable in the things of God. That is because they tear verses like this out of context. Incorrectly applying this verse leaves a sense that “I know it all simply because I believe.”

Even Matthew Henry misses the intent of these words, applying them to the Gentile led church. He says, "...private instruction shall not be so necessary under the New Testament as it was under the Old. The old dispensation was shadowy, dark, ritual, and less understood; their priests preached but seldom, and but a few at a time, and the Spirit of God was more sparingly given out. But under the new dispensation there shall be such abundance of public qualified preachers of the gospel, and dispensers of ordinances stately in the solemn assemblies, and so great a flocking to them, as doves to their windows, and such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of God to make the ministration of the gospel effectual, that there shall be a mighty increase and spreading of Christian knowledge in persons of all sorts, of each sex, and of all ages."

Although he doesn't take the extremely unsound position of supposed "Spirit-filled" Charismatics, he still misapplies the intent of the passage by assuming it is speaking of instruction for Gentiles.

Though it is true that we now have the ability to receive the word through the availability of written material, through easier travel, and through time-availability. And though it is true that we also have the ability to understand the word because of its complete rather than "shadowy, dark, ritual" nature, that is not the context of the words. In the end, we in the Gentile church can learn from Hebrews, and some thoughts from the epistle do carry over to us at this time; but the words are given for us to understand the dispensational model as it applies to Israel, after their time of punishment.

Life application: Let us be sure to keep things in context.

Lord Jesus, how wonderful it is to be able to watch movies about you, listen to on-line Bibles, sermons and commentaries, and to hear Christian music right over our radios! We're filled with an abundance of Your word, if we will simply take advantage of those things. Help us now to use our time wisely, and to apply these wonderful blessings to our lives! Amen.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Hebrews 8:12

This quote is again from Jeremiah 31. It is a general citation of a part of verse 34. It begins with, “For I will be merciful.” The Greek word is *hileós*. It is an adjective which speaks of propitiation. It describes the appeasing of divine wrath and “providing God’s covenant mercy which rescues the believer by His *atonement* (bringing divine satisfaction)” (HELPS Word Studies). This is based upon their coming under the precepts of the New Covenant, as stated in verse 8:10.

God has promised that this will be provided to Israel for “their unrighteousness.” The word is a common one which signifies the opposite of justice. It is a violation of God’s standards, which in turn brings about God’s disapproval because it is contrary to His righteous judgment. Being a plural noun, it would be well translated as “iniquities.” The Lord has promised that He will favorably look upon them, being merciful toward their iniquities. This idea is seen reflected in Paul’s word of 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

Under the New Covenant, man is covered in the righteousness of Christ, and God no longer counts men’s sins against them. This is how this promise from Jeremiah, and repeated here in Hebrews, comes about. Christ’s atoning blood covers over all sin and unrighteousness. Because of this, and in accord with Paul’s words just quoted from 2 Corinthians, the verse then finishes with, “and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

There is complete forgiveness of sin, meaning full pardon for the offender, because of the reception of Jesus Christ’s completed work. He bore the weight of the law, and He died in fulfillment of it. In Christ, the penalty of the law is

removed, once and forever. The opposite, however, is true for those who do not come to Christ. Until they come to Him, the penalty of the law stands. Every infraction demands that its penalty be imputed and punished.

Of the citation of these verses from Jeremiah 31, Charles Ellicott interestingly states the following –

“This subject has presented difficulties, because it has been forgotten that this Scripture speaks of no sudden change in man’s relation to God. The essential promises of the new covenant were not unknown under the old. ‘Thy law is within my heart’ is the saying of one Psalmist; ‘Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,’ of another. But in regard to the nation there was failure. The rites of the Law did not lead to the perception of spiritual truths; ordinances which were intended to teach the divine intolerance of sin became mere ceremonies; external sanctions did not preserve the nation in true obedience to God’s law. To all, the former covenant (like the first Tabernacle, Hebrews 9:9) was a parable, explained only when the new covenant (which was in truth *before* the old, Galatians 3:17) was ‘ordained.’”

Though not writing about the dispensational model, Ellicott notes that “in regard to the nation there was failure.” Even without teaching what is obvious, meaning that the church did not replace Israel, he understood there is a difficulty with this passage *because of the nation of Israel*. And so the question concerning this verse is, “Has an understanding of the New Covenant ever happened to the whole house of Israel and the house of Judah?” The answer is obviously, “No.” Ellicott understood this much. And so there is, actually, no difficulty in the author’s words if one considers God’s plan of redemption in dispensations. God has initiated a Gentile-led church during Israel’s time of disobedience. Though He has promised that Israel would come under the New Covenant, that has not yet come about.

As stated in the introduction to Hebrews, the layout of Scripture shows that this is yet future. The book of Hebrews follows Paul’s letters to the Gentile-led church. After the church age has ended, Israel’s conversion will come about. The structure

of the Bible actually confirms the dispensational model. God is not done with Israel, and these verses are not speaking of the dispensation of grace.

However, the truth of the words for individuals in the dispensation of grace still applies, and it confirms the doctrine of eternal salvation because of eternal cleansing. Under the Old Covenant, the faithful were required to sacrifice for their sins – repeatedly. There were annual sacrifices, sacrifices for sins they unknowingly committed, sacrifices for being unclean in one way or another, sacrifices for this, and sacrifices for that. These were a constant reminder of their defiled state in the presence of an absolutely holy God.

Forgiveness was granted when the sacrifices were made; but as soon as they stepped away from the altar if they were to become defiled again, they would again need to sacrifice because of their defilement. In contrast, when a person accepts what Jesus has done, forgiveness is immediate and eternal. As Paul says in Romans 4:5-8, which is a quote of Psalm 32, there is blessedness to the one whom God credits righteousness apart from works –

“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;

⁸ Blessed *is the* man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

Unfortunately, in the church, there are countless souls who are forever beating themselves up for past sins. Jesus has forgiven them, but they have yet to either forgive themselves or to fully accept what Jesus has done. This may demonstrate a lack of faith in the power of Christ’s shed blood. Or, it perversely may demonstrate a streak of pride which says, “I must do more than what Christ has done. His fulfillment of the law was insufficient for me.” In this, they turn back to accomplishing deeds of the law in order to please God. This is what Israel did in their rejection of Jesus, and it has brought about 2000 years of condemnation

upon them. Does anyone really think that God will treat them any differently for doing exactly what Israel did? In their turning back to the law, they reject Christ, and they will be condemned.

Life application: If you are caught in a cycle of stressing over sins already forgiven by Christ, end it today! You are free from all condemnation because of His work. On the other hand, if you are continuing in a sin for which you were previously forgiven, you need to step back and understand that Christ's grace and mercy are not given as a license to continue in unholy living. Have balance in your life; confess when necessary, but don't carry the burden of sins God has already washed away.

Lord, help us to let go of the feelings of guilt from past sin. It is certain that Christ's blood covers them all, but at times, our hearts are still heavy because of our faithlessness. But also Lord, may we never become calloused to sin so that we will again turn to it and discredit Your glorious name. Amen!

In that He says, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Hebrews 8:13

Before reading this analysis, read the verse again. Now, putting aside any presuppositions you have about the Mosaic Covenant, ask yourself what is the clear, obvious, and intended meaning of these words? The "first" is speaking of the Mosaic Covenant. The author is neither vague nor ambiguous in what he says. Trust God's word and not man's flawed attempt to deny what is clearly stated.

There are two major points of interest in this one verse. The first is of two parts.

- 1) As has been repeated several ways already, the author makes a clear and obvious statement concerning the end of the Old Covenant – it is obsolete. He begins with, "In that He says, 'A new *covenant*.'" That is referring to the words of verse 8:8 which is the quote from Jeremiah 31 concerning the

Lord's promise of a New Covenant. He is restating the thought to introduce the second part, which is

- 2) that in the giving of the New Covenant, "He has made the first obsolete." Miriam Webster defines the word obsolete as, "no longer in use or no longer current." The Greek word is *palaióó*, and it carries that same meaning. It is "worn out," and declared obsolete.

The law, meaning the entire law received at Mt. Sinai, and which is also known as the Law of Moses (or the Mosaic Covenant), became obsolete when Christ introduced the New Covenant in His own blood. Why would the author repeat this in several different ways and hint at it in several more?

Remember that he was writing to first century Jews who had spent their entire life under the Old Covenant. Giving up all of its rituals and formalities would be exceptionally hard, particularly when facing the pressure of returning to it by family and community. For this reason, the author brings up the superiority of the New Covenant in so many ways. By the time he's done writing his epistle, they will have no doubt about the supremacy of Christ, His work, and the covenant He established through His cross.

With this obvious statement, he then says, "Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish." The word translated as, "ready to vanish," is used only here in Scripture, *aphanismos*. It signifies being obliterated or abrogated. It is set to disappear.

People argue over the dating of New Testament books. If someone wants to discredit them, he will generally tend to assign a much later date to the book. The logic is that the more time between Christ's ministry and the dating of the letter means either

- 1) more time for myth to be introduced,

- 2) a more solidified doctrine will result – thought up by man through contemplation and not by a mere understanding of the work of Christ.

In the case of Hebrews, there is no need to fret over a later date – such as a second or even a third-century document. Why? Because the temple was still standing and the nation of Israel was still practicing its rituals. It wasn't until 5 August AD70 that the temple was destroyed – a little over 38 years after the cross. By stating that the Old Covenant would “soon disappear,” it confirms that the temple was still standing and being used.

However, there is actually more to this thought than is realized. If one understands the prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27, it is certain that Israel still has seven more years allowed under the Old Covenant to come into a right relationship with the Lord in the New. This, once again, validates the dispensational model, and it shows that the doctrine of replacement theology is incorrect. Hebrews, being placed after Paul's church-age epistles, reveals this model more clearly. It shows what God is doing in redemptive history. The church age will end at the rapture, and that will be followed by the seven years of the tribulation. These seven years correspond to the final seven-year period in his prophecy.

It is during these seven years that Israel will go through the horrors of the tribulation period, all because they have either rejected, or clung to the Old when they should have accepted the New. But those seven years will bring them to the point where they will, as a nation, call out to God through their Messiah. When they do, He will return to them. Marvelous things lie ahead in God's redemptive plan.

Life application: If you claim you believe in Christ Jesus, then what are you doing adhering to precepts from the Old Covenant? It is obsolete. All you are doing, by working out deeds of the law, is telling God that you feel what Christ did for you was insufficient and that you can do it better. Good luck with that! Come to Christ, trust in Christ alone, and get out of whatever mindset you are in that says you can do a better job than God can in earning your salvation.

Yes Lord! We have a sure word! Every word in the Bible was carefully selected for our edification, and we can assuredly rest in all it contains. Praises to You, O God, for giving us clarity in what was accomplished by Christ Jesus. Now, through faith in His work, we can be eternally safe! Amen.

CHAPTER 9

Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. Hebrews 9:1

For the past several chapters, the author has talked about the superiority of Jesus' ministry, its eternality, the oath on which it was established in comparison to how the Old Covenant was brought about, the inability of believers to meet the Old Covenant demands, and so on. Now in this verse, and for a few more verses, the layout of the tabernacle as described in the Old Covenant will be seen.

To begin, the author says, "Then indeed." He will now be stressing the fact that there is a contrast between the Old Covenant and the New by first highlighting important points about the Old. In doing so, he will be able to demonstrate that these differences only pointed to a more perfect covenant with a more perfect system.

The "first covenant" is referring to the Old Covenant which established the Law of Moses. It had "ordinances of divine service" which are clearly detailed in Exodus and Leviticus. The duties were exacting, and regulated what the priests were to do, when they were to do it, and how they were to conduct themselves as priests. This first covenant also had "the earthly sanctuary."

The definite article points directly to one sanctuary where these things were conducted. It is not as if any sanctuary could be attached to these rites and ordinances. Rather, everything about the sanctuary was specifically described and made ready for this divine service. The two (the sanctuary and its services) form one whole concerning the ministrations on behalf of the people. The fact it is described as an "earthly" sanctuary immediately implies that it is not a part of that which is heavenly. This particular sanctuary was set apart as holy, but it was only a type and a shadow of something else. Being earthly, it was also corruptible. It was simply a fabrication of various materials which would eventually wear out, fall apart, or require constant maintenance.

Despite this, meticulous care was taken in its construction. Like the services which were prescribed to be done there, the very structure and makeup of the tabernacle were also exactly prescribed. Much of what was mandated is noted in Exodus 26-30, and then it is repeated in Exodus 36-40 in describing the actual construction. This repetition was to show that the workmen painstakingly followed the specifications that were given. Likewise, when the permanent temple was built under Solomon's reign, it also had specific guidelines to follow –

“All this,” said David, “the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.” 1 Chronicles 28:19

Just as Moses received the plans for the tabernacle, so King David received those for the temple. The worship of God, including where, how, and when, was detailed exactly to teach the people of His absolute holiness and to indicate that He must be approached in a very specific manner.

Life application: If extreme care was taken under the Old Covenant to adhere to the construction of the sanctuary, and in the conduct of the rites associated with it, and as these things only pointed to Christ and His work, then shouldn't we treat the Lord Jesus in a more honorable and respectable way than even Israel did concerning their rites? Let us always magnify His person, and never diminish His glory in the eyes of others, as we speak of what He has done.

Heavenly Father, how blessed we are to have the fullness of Christ Jesus and His glorious ministry. Instead of repeated sacrifices for sin, feelings of guilt over past deeds, and a worship which was regulated in detail, we have one sacrifice in Christ, freedom from guilt, and our worship is “in spirit and in truth.” Thank you for the freedom we have in Christ! Amen.

For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; Hebrews 9:2

In verse 1, the author brought in the subject of an “earthly sanctuary.” He now begins this verse with, “For a tabernacle.” The tabernacle is based upon the pattern Moses had seen. It is this which is consistently described here in Hebrews, rather than the later temples which were built in Jerusalem. Those were according to the same basic shapes and layouts, but there are differences. Therefore, the original tabernacle is the basis of the discussion in Hebrews. This tabernacle “was prepared.”

The idea here is that it was made by men’s hands; it is an earthly edifice. Moses was told to collect certain items from the people as an offering. Those were detailed in Exodus 25:1-7. After that, we read in Exodus 25:8, 9 –

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.”

After this, the actual instructions for how to fashion all these things were given, and then a near repetition of this was given in the construction of those same things. Everything was minutely prescribed and recorded to ensure that all was made according to the pattern. All of it was for the sanctuary. Within the sanctuary was the tent of meeting, and within the tent of meeting was the tabernacle itself. It is that area which the author now speaks of.

The entire layout of the sanctuary and all the materials used for it are given in great detail in Exodus, but this verse and the next few are only focusing on two specific rooms of the tabernacle – the Holy place and the Most Holy place. These may be known in various translations by other similar names. This verse details the first of these two rooms. And so the author begins by saying, “in which was the lampstand.” Actually, based on verse 9:6 where the author speaks in the present tense, the words should say, “in which is the lampstand.” The author

speaks of these things based on Scripture. It is as if the priests are standing in front of him, ministering, and he is detailing what is going on before him.

The golden lampstand, or menorah, is first detailed in Exodus 25:31-40. Next, the author mentions “the table and the showbread.” The table was actually first detailed immediately before the lampstand in Exodus 25:23-30. The bread itself is actually described much later, in Leviticus 24:5-9. A detailed study of these things is available from the Superior Word in sermons which can be accessed in written, video, and audio formats.

Finally, the author says, “which is called the sanctuary.” The Greek literally reads, “*the holies*.” Using the term “sanctuary” does not correspond to the thought given in the Old Testament. The entire compound described to Moses is normally translated “the sanctuary.” The first room in the tabernacle is called the Holy Place. Here in the Greek, the word is given in the plural, and thus it should be translated as “*the holies*.” This is simply to maintain consistency.

Life application: Everything about the items being mentioned, down to the smallest detail, was given to picture the coming Person and work of Christ. Following along with the sermons mentioned above will reveal this to you. In the end, we have an absolutely sure word concerning Christ Jesus. There is no need to doubt if we are secure in our eternal destiny. If we have come to God through Christ, it is more certain than anything else. Trust in Christ and continue to pursue Him all the days of your life.

What an honor and a joy to know we have the fullness of Christ as revealed in the Bible. The ancients had implements which could only imitate the glories to come in Jesus. We thank You Lord for bestowing on us the riches of Your majesty as revealed in Him. All hail the name of Jesus! Amen.

...and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, Hebrews 9:3

The author described the first room of the tabernacle in the previous verse. That contained the lampstand (the menorah), the table, and the showbread. Dividing that from the final room, the Holiest of All (or the Most Holy *Place* as the NKJV translates it in the Old Testament), was a beautiful veil. Here, the veil is called “the second veil.” This is to distinguish it from another hanging which was at the entrance to the first room, the Holy Place.

This “second veil” is described in Exodus 26:31-33. On it, cherubim were woven. These were a reminder of the cherubim recorded in Genesis 3 which guarded the entrance to Eden. They were said to be east of the garden. The entire sanctuary also faced east. This veil, facing east, symbolically pictures the only way to be restored to God, and thus, the only way to be returned to paradise. This and more is carefully detailed in the Superior Word sermon corresponding to those verses.

Here, the author says that behind this “second veil” was “the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All.” The author will continue to describe what was contained within the rooms in the tabernacle in the verses ahead, as well as some of what occurred there as the priests conducted their duties. However, he will not address the actual shape or size of these rooms. It is this next room to be described, the Holiest of All (or the Most Holy Place), that should be reviewed to gain a fuller understanding of what will be explained in the next verses.

Determining the exact dimensions of the Holiest of All (Most Holy *Place*) in the tabernacle is rather complicated, but it can be done from the details of the Bible. This is thoroughly explained in the Exodus 26:31-37 sermon. Further, the Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus rightly states it was 10 x 10 x 10, or 1000 cubits exactly. This is documented in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, Chapter 6, Paragraph 4.

Later, the Bible tells us that the size of the Most Holy Place in the temple in Jerusalem was “twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high” (1 Kings 6:20). In both instances then, the shape of the Most Holy Place was a perfect cube. Remember that everything about both structures was given by God – first to Moses for the tabernacle and then later to David for the Temple. This reason is that they were a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (verse 8:5). And this is exactly what the Bible later records in the book of Revelation –

“The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.” Revelation 21:16

Some have questioned whether this city is shaped like a pyramid or a cube, but allowing the Bible to interpret itself answers the question – it is a cube. This city which is prepared for the faithful believers of all ages is immense in proportions. The translation of “twelve thousand furlongs” equates approximately 1500 miles. In other words, it would fill up much of the land mass of the United States. And that is only in length and width; it is equally high.

Life application: As you are going about your business, remember that God has something wonderfully special prepared for you and for all of those who have called on Jesus by faith. Don't let the tedium of life get you down, but rather keep things in their proper perspective – God has marvelous wonders in store for you!

Lord God, thank You for the sure promises of Your word and the splendid detail it holds for us as believers. Nothing is left unattended; every detail is just what we need in order to hold on to as we await what is coming! We love and praise You, and we thank You for the sure promises we possess. In the name of Jesus our Lord we pray! Amen.

...which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; Hebrews 9:4

The words now explain what was to be found in the "Holiest of All" (the Most Holy Place) within the tabernacle. The author begins with, "the golden censer." The translation is lacking. It is not a censer, as if picked up and carried by the priest. Rather, it is an altar which remained in its place constantly. The Greek word to describe it is found only here in the New Testament. This altar is said here to be in the Most Holy Place. However, this seems to be in error. The description of this item is found in Exodus 30:1-10. The verse concerning its placement is found in Exodus 30:6 –

"And you shall put it before the veil that *is* before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the Testimony, where I will meet with you."

This altar of incense, also called the "golden altar" (Numbers 4:11), and here in Hebrews as "the golden censer," was not in the Most Holy Place, but rather before the veil in the Holy Place. For this reason, some translations call it the "golden censer" and not the "golden altar." This is because a censer was filled with incense once a year and taken behind the veil by the high priest. Thus to avoid any supposed contradictions, translators assume this is what is being spoken of. But that does not appear to be the author's intent. He is surely speaking of the altar of incense. But why would the author then expressly state that this item was within the Most Holy Place? John Lange explains the reason –

"For this reason we would rather find a theological idea than an archæological error in that passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews (9:4) which puts it in the Holy of holies. For this is the altar which by its incense symbolizes the prayer of the high-priest (Rev. 5:8; Heb. 5:7)."

It took a full sermon of explanation to detail the significance of this item, but to shortly explain the placement, incense was burned upon it twice a day. Being directly before the veil, the smell of this incense was the only thing to go behind the veil each day and throughout the year (with the exception of the high priest, once a year on the Day of Atonement). Incense in the Bible represents prayer. And so, the theological idea is that this golden altar is the transition between the earthly and the heavenly; between the physical world and the spiritual world. Therefore, the altar is said to symbolically be behind the veil. This is the last piece of furniture to be described by the Lord in Exodus, and yet it is the first one mentioned here by the author in Hebrews. The reason for this is because of its location. It is that which is passed first as one enters into the Most Holy Place. To more fully understand this, go watch this sermon –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4Dw8RDwjRk>

The next item behind the veil is the very first item described by the Lord for construction. It is “the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold,” which is detailed in Exodus 25:10-16. Again, this item required an entire sermon to explain all of its intricate meaning. The author here only mentions that it is overlaid with gold. The gold symbolizes Christ’s deity, among other things. To understand the marvel of what this ark pictures, please refer to this sermon –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-VPtDW-qB8&t>

After this, the author describes that which was contained in the ark. First, he notes “the golden pot that had the manna.” That was actually made before the ark was prepared, at the time of the initial giving of the manna which is recorded in Exodus 16. There it said –

“And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.’” Exodus 16:33

Later, after the ark was constructed, this is said to have been placed in the ark. To understand the full significance of this marvelous item, please refer to this sermon – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1pFhhIQg48>

Along with that was “Aaron’s rod that budded.” That is detailed in Numbers 17. As of the date of this commentary, that sermon is a few weeks away from being typed. However, it is a marvelous passage, the sermon of which will be worth your Sunday morning attention.

Finally, in this verse, the author notes “the tablets of the covenant.” These were the second set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments. The first were dashed to pieces by Moses in Exodus 32. However, in Exodus 34, Moses was told to “Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*, and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke” (Exodus 34:1). To understand the significance of what these second tablets (in contrast to the first set) signify, please take the time to watch this sermon – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRNaHhDdzks>

Life application: Most people know that the tablets of the covenant were kept in the ark, but they have probably never thought of why this was so. These reflect the perfect law of God by which all people will be judged. Those who fulfill them perfectly (and none can) will be accepted into God’s paradise; those who fail will be condemned. However, God gave us His Son to fulfill them on our behalf. Therefore, those who call on Him as their Mediator will be covered with His perfect atonement. This is why blood was applied to the top of the Ark (on the Mercy Seat) once a year. It symbolized an innocent death on behalf of the unrighteous. When the Mercy Seat was removed, only judgment could follow, such as in this case – “Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter” (1 Samuel 6:19). In Christ’s fulfillment of the law, He died on the cross, shedding His blood for our atonement. Paul says that the law was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). The symbolism is clear – the law is complete and finished in Christ. In His shed blood, a New Covenant was introduced. We are no longer under law, and we can no longer be condemned when we come to Christ. Stay away from heretics who reinsert the law in an attempt to be justified before God. Hold fast to the grace which is found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord God – how beautifully the Old Testament unfolds in the Person and work of Jesus. Thank you so much for the book of Hebrews which opens our eyes to His wonderful perfection – our Substitution, our Bread of Life, and our faithfully watching Mediator! Hallelujah and Amen!

...and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Hebrews 9:5

After mentioning the ark and its contents, the author next turns to that which was “above it.” What is now to be described is designed as a lid for the ark itself. The ark was an open box of wood, completely overlaid with pure gold. On top of that would rest this next item. What will be named is actually one solid piece, but the author describes it from the top down. That is recorded in Exodus 25:17-21 –

“You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width. ¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it *of one piece* with the mercy seat. ²⁰ And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat. ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.”

As you can see, at the top of this are “the cherubim of glory.” What this means is they are the spot where the glory of the Lord would be seen from. This is recorded, for example, in Numbers 7:89 –

“Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that *was* on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.”

These were fashioned from the same gold, being one with “the mercy seat.” The Greek word is *hilastērion*, and it signifies the place of propitiation. It is the spot where the wrath of God is appeased, thus bringing about a state of propitiation between God and His people.

The only time the noun form of this word is seen, apart from this use in Hebrews, is by Paul. There he says that Jesus Christ is our place of propitiation; He is our mercy seat –

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:21-26

John, however, uses a form of the same word, *hilasmos*, to twice describe Jesus as being the propitiation for our sins –

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” 1 John 2:2

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10

With these references, we can see that Christ is the spot (the mercy seat) of our propitiation, and His shed blood is that which effects that propitiation. What is being seen in mere type and shadow is realized in the punishment upon Christ leading to His death on the cross. In other words, the wrath poured out on Him through His passion, and which ultimately led to His death, is what brings peace between God and man.

God's entrance into humanity in the Person of Jesus was purposefully intended to bring about our propitiation after He fulfilled the law. In His perfect obedience to the law, He was – in Himself – seen to be the perfection of the law. In His death, the law was fulfilled and thus ended. At the same time, in His death, the wrath of God for the sin of those who transgressed under the law was poured out on Christ in an act of substitution (something allowed under the law), where an innocent died in the place of the guilty. In this act, propitiation was made between God and those who accept this act of substitution. And in the ending of the law, a New Covenant – in Christ's blood – was enacted.

The author finishes with, "Of these things we cannot now speak in detail." The words, "these things" are referring to everything he has said from verse 9:1 until now. The meaning is that everything associated with the "ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary" of verse 9:1, and which has only been briefly described, actually has much more which could be explained. And so, to get a fuller understanding of these things, if that is something which would interest you, you may refer to the series in the Superior Word sermons beginning with Exodus 25:1 and continuing on through the rest of the book of Exodus, and then through the book of Leviticus. And indeed, why stop there? Just keep watching all of the sermons from the Superior Word as they are published.

Life application: If there is a need for propitiation, meaning mercy, then that must mean that God really is angry at those who need mercy. It cannot be that mercy is necessary if no offense exists. Therefore, there must be a means of obtaining God's mercy, or there must be a complete removal of that which offends Him. Thinking this through logically, if God has performed that work Himself through the Person of Jesus Christ, and if Jesus Christ has said that He is the only way to be restored to the Father, then no person can be saved apart from Him. Further, as

only He fulfilled the Law of Moses, then no person who attempts to please God through adherence to the Law of Moses can be saved. Those who were under the law, and who looked forward to Messiah, were saved in anticipation of Messiah. But once Messiah has come, only through faith in His work can anyone else be saved. Those who hold to the law for their justification cannot be, and indeed they are not, pleasing to God.

Lord God Almighty, thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. Hebrews 9:6

The author begins with, “Now when these things had been thus prepared.” Though it appears he is specifically referring to the original sanctuary made at the time of Moses, this can still also refer to temple in Jerusalem. In the case of the portable sanctuary, only the priests, the sons of Aaron, could put up and take down the Most Holy articles. These were covered so that no one could see them when they were taken down, and uncovered only when the tabernacle was around them and assembled. After this, the other Levites could begin to perform their duties.

In the case of the permanent temple, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place were prepared only once and then they were left to the exclusive use of the priests. The priests’ duties are laid out in the books of Moses, but particularly in Exodus and Leviticus.

The author then next says, “the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.” As detailed in the law, there were things to be done regularly in the Holy Place. It is where the lampstand (the menorah) needed to be tended to daily. It is where the altar of incense was, and where there were regular daily offerings, and it is where the table of showbread was.

This also needed regular attention in the replacement of the loaves of bread each week. Both the actual schedule of these things, and the details for performing them, are detailed carefully in the law itself.

These and other duties (such as the sprinkling of certain sin offerings before the veil) were conducted as needed, by either the high priest or one of the other priests, depending on what was according to the law.

The specificity here in this verse is given to show a contrast between these regular services performed in the Holy Place and those services which were then to be conducted in the Most Holy Place. That will begin to be explained in the next verse.

Life application: As noted in previous verses, every single detail of what is being presented by the author concerning these rites and rituals is merely a foreshadowing of the Person of Jesus Christ, or the work He has accomplished for His people. Israel, however, rejected Christ and their temple was destroyed. Israel is, even now, preparing to begin these rituals once again. They were ineffective in bringing the people to a right relationship with God in the past, and they will continue to be ineffective in doing so in the future. It is a sad thing to see how they have missed Christ, but someday they will put the law behind them and, as a people, they will call out to Christ Jesus and finally be freed of this heavy yoke which they have carried since the time of Moses. Pray that many Jews will come to Jesus now and be saved through His shed blood instead of continuing down this same miserable path of ineffective law-related rituals.

Lord God, just as the priests in the temple had their regular duties, so we have regular tasks in our jobs. Give us the strength, wisdom, and ability to properly perform our duties, no matter what they are. And may You alone receive the praise as our fellow workers see our conduct. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; Hebrews 9:7

The words, "the second part," are speaking of the second and final room within the tabernacle, known as the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies, Holiest of All, etc – based on translation). It is the room where the items of verses 9:4 & 9:5 were described. No person was allowed to enter this room, under pain of death, with the exception of the consecrated high priest. And even he could only enter "alone once a year." This was on the Day of Atonement.

But even then, there were set restrictions on his entry into this inner room. He was never to come "without blood." The shed blood signified that something had died in a substitutionary manner in place of the sin-filled offender. In this case, it was inclusive of all of the people in Israel, of whom he was not exempt. As it says, "which he offered for himself."

The high priest of Israel was a sinner. He was born in sin, and he sinned in his life throughout the year. If he came into this room without blood, he would die. This is not because the blood of an animal could actually cover over his sins, but because of the typology which was pointing to Christ's perfect substitutionary blood, which alone can truly take away sin. And so the high priest first offered for himself, and then also "*for* the people's sins."

No person was exempted from this. In Leviticus 23, further instructions concerning this day are given. There it says –

"And you shall do no work on that same day, for it *is* the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. ²⁹ For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You shall do no manner of work; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³² *It shall be* to you a sabbath of

solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.” Leviticus 23:28-32

These people could have actually worked, and who would be the wiser? And so it can be seen that these instructions come down to a single word for each person in Israel, which is “faith.” A person who didn’t have faith in what was occurring in the temple in Jerusalem would simply go to work or fail to afflict his soul. But a person who truly understood his deserved penalty for violating God’s law would be obedient to these precepts on this holiest day of the year. In this, it then acknowledges that their sins were “*committed* in ignorance.”

In other words, and as an example, King David committed adultery with another man’s wife. He further, then, had that man killed. He knew the law and he knew the penalty for it. But his sin, though understood as such, was regarded as a sin of ignorance because of his heart first having gone astray, and then his remorse over his actions when he was confronted with them. Any person who failed to have this attitude on this most holy of days would not receive atonement, because he failed to acknowledge that his sin was deserving of death. Thus, the blood of the substitute was without meaning to him.

This symbolism follows throughout the Bible. There must be a substitution for the sins people commit, or their life is forfeit. Jesus then is that Substitution. It is His blood, and His blood alone, which all of these rituals foreshadowed. Without His life in exchange for an individual’s sin, that individual’s life is forfeit; eternal condemnation awaits. Think on this and understand that you will face God either on your own merits, or on those of Jesus Christ. You will fail on your own; you will prevail in Him.

The instructions for entering this second part of the tabernacle are minutely recorded in Leviticus 16. To understand the significance of each detail of this holiest of days, and how these things point directly to the Person and work of Christ, please refer to these sermons

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KDwl9FXA28>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa5lOoxeF8l&t>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZD4Gi3rR1s&t>

Life application: Considering this precept in light of Christ Jesus, we can see that until someone realizes that Christ died for their sins, and then accepts that payment for what he has done wrong, it is to him as if Christ's death was unnecessary to atone for his life. Thus, his sins are not considered as in ignorance, and he will have nothing to atone for his high-handed sin against God. His condemnation remains, and he will never enter into God's paradise. It is only through the shed blood of Christ that anyone can enter into that Most Holy Place. Thank God that our High Priest has gone before us to accomplish this on our behalf.

Thank You, O God, for the great blessing of knowing that all sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ our Lord. If we will but look to His great sacrifice on Calvary's cross as our Substitution, we will be saved. Without that, we stand utterly condemned in Your perfect presence. All glory is from You, for You, and to You alone! Amen.

...the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. Hebrews 9:8

The words here are based on what was just stated in the previous verse. Taken together, they say, "But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered *for* himself and for the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing."

As noted, a precept was being taught to the people through the total restriction of entry into the “second part,” meaning the Most Holy Place. As this place signifies a return to paradise that was lost at the fall of man, the people were being instructed that no return to God’s paradise was granted to the people through the Old Covenant. The cherubim on the veil symbolized the cherubim who stand guard at the entrance to Eden.

This is certain because the author says, “the Holy Spirit indicating this.” The Holy Spirit issues forth the words of Scripture, and those same words of Scripture issued forth the instructions for the priestly duties of Israel. Further, the Holy Spirit also illuminates those same words to be understood by those who pay heed. The people were being instructed that even the high priest was not granted a return to paradise because of his office. He was only allowed in to make a picture of what the coming Christ would do in reality. He went in with blood, he left after his duties were complete, and he could not enter again until the next Day of Atonement. This was to show “that the way into the Holiest of All [the Most Holy Place, symbolizing a return to paradise] was not yet made manifest.”

If the way into paradise had been made manifest, then once the rites of the high priest were complete, the veil would have been taken down and the people could have happily come streaming back in, assured of glory. But such was not the case. The high priest departed, the veil remained, and no person was authorized to enter under pain of death. This remained true the whole time that “the first tabernacle was still standing.”

Although getting ahead in the commentary, the veil is said later in Hebrews to represent the body of Christ. Also, in Matthew 27, we read this –

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.” Matthew 27:50-51

The symbolism is obvious. Christ performed the work of atonement in His suffering and death. When He died, the law died with Him (meaning the Old Covenant). That is seen in Colossians 2:14, where the law is said to be nailed to the cross. In His death, the veil (His Body) was torn. Likewise, the law, of which He is the fulfillment, was torn and ended at that time. At the same time, the veil in the temple (which was a foreshadowing of His Body) was torn from top to bottom, and thus access to Eden is restored once again for all who come through His torn Body. He is “The Way” to this restoration.

As a side note concerning this, the Talmud (an extra-biblical Jewish writing) says that the veil in the temple, which was just before the Most Holy Place, was 40 cubits (60 feet) long, 20 cubits (30 feet) wide, and the thickness of the palm of the hand. It was made of 72 squares which were joined together, and was so heavy that it needed 300 priests to manipulate it. Whether this is an accurate description or not, it was exceedingly large, and yet it was torn “from top to bottom.” Due to its height and size, no human could have done this. Whether it occurred by an earthquake cracking the mantle from which it was suspended or not (as is speculated) is irrelevant. The fact that it occurred the moment Christ died is what is of significance. God was teaching Israel a lesson concerning Christ; we are to pay heed.

Life application: Understanding what occurred in fulfillment of the Old Covenant types and shadows, no person should ever say, “We still need to observe the precepts of the Law of Moses.” The author has explained the same thing again and again. In addition to what he is saying, the words of all of the other New Testament writers are in complete agreement. And even more certain is that of the witness of the Holy Spirit – from both Testaments. We are under a New Covenant and we are in a new dispensation. To reintroduce the law is to reject the work of Christ. Who can do such a thing and be held guiltless? Come to Christ, and put away your arrogant, high handed attacks against the Lord who has already accomplished everything necessary to return His people to paradise.

Lord God, we can only look with astonishment and complete gratitude at the work which you accomplished on our behalf – the death of Jesus – which opened a restored relationship with You! And even more, the resurrection! Now we also have the hope of eternal life! Amen.

It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience— Hebrews 9:9

These words are referring to the sacrifices that were still being conducted at the temple in Jerusalem. If you read it in other translations, you'll see how various translators choose to state it. Some put it in the tense of "was" and "are;" others choose "is" and "were;" while others choose both verbs to be present tense. Translators choose to decide such things based on what they already believe concerning the 1) date of the original letter, or 2) if the letter was written to Christians in general or to first century Jewish believers in Christ, or 3) that the words are set from the eternal perspective of Scripture where what is stated, even if accomplished, continues on as if in the present tense.

The NKJV is most surely correct because it places the tenses as "was" and "are." "Was" refers to the state of the sacrifices from their inception, even to the time of the letter. "Are" indicates these sacrifices were ongoing at the time of the letter (the temple had not yet been destroyed), but also because of the eternal perspective of Scripture.

And though the letter was certainly written to first-century Jewish believers, it also will apply to those Jews who will be alive when the temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt. Should they return to these rites and rituals? The author would emphatically tell them, "No."

Understanding these things, he says, “It was symbolic for the present time.” Here, the word translated as “symbolic” is *parabole*. It is the same word translated as “parable” in the gospels. The author is saying that the things of the Old Covenant – such as the layout, structure, and materials of the sanctuary, all of the rites associated with that sanctuary, and even the days associated with those rites (such as the Day of Atonement) were teaching aids and living lessons which only figuratively pointed to what Christ would do.

He was writing to a Hebrew audience that had heard of Christ, but which was dealing with the decision of whether they should continue to adhere to temple rituals as well as following Christ. Did they need to make offerings for sin at the temple as prescribed by law? Again, the answer would be, “No.” He then continues by saying of the offerings, “in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered.” The words, “in which,” are referring to those things which are symbolic. A better rendering would be, “according to which.” As noted, the present tense is correct. The temple still stood, and there were Jews who were confused about what to do concerning making gifts and offerings in order to be right with God. And what does he continue saying about those offerings? That they “cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience.”

The words, “him who performed the service,” are speaking of the person coming with his offering, not the priest. The person who takes such a gift or offering to the temple is performing a service in hopes of cleansing his conscience. However, it is not possible that this could happen. The reason why is because as soon as he turned around and walked away from the offering which was intended to cleanse, he might sin again in some way, even before he stepped outside the temple area. If he was honest, he would go get another animal and hurry back to the priest to have the sin corrected. Such a stream of sacrifices would, literally, be never-ending. Unless there was a one-time for all-time Sacrifice, no person would ever dare to leave the area around the temple. Sin in man is that deeply entrenched. The very thoughts in his head are vile and require atonement.

The author will continue with this thought in the next verse, and then he will contrast what is stated here by showing the infinitely superior work of Christ, and its effect for the believer under the New Covenant.

Life application: It's important to study and understand where translators have done a poor job and why. As the memo in the preface to the original 1611 King James Version says, a "variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures." The reason is, "They that are wise, had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it may be the other." In other words, if someone sticks dogmatically to a single translation he is unwise. Translators are fallible, and therefore by studying and contemplating multiple translations, one is much more readily able to properly follow what is being said and why. This really is important because the wording and terminology used in the original languages is often difficult at best and sometimes completely unknown to modern scholars.

Lord, how truly blessed we are to live in a day where Your word is translated into thousands of languages; and in some languages many times. We have study tools in abundance including commentaries, devotionals, computer programs, and more. Help us to use these to search out the wonders of Your word! May our knowledge of You be a joyous, lifelong pursuit! Amen.

...concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. Hebrews 9:10

In the previous verse, it was explained that the things of the past which were recorded concerning the makeup of the sanctuary, the articles contained within in it, and the rites and rituals associated with it, were "symbolic for the present time." As noted, the word "symbolic" means "a parable." They were ineffectual in perfecting the conscience. The author now continues that thought by saying that they were "concerned only with foods and drinks."

The "foods and drinks" are those things presented to God as sacrifices, gifts, and offerings. They included animal, grain, and wine offerings of various sorts and for various reasons, such as peace offerings, thank offerings, and so forth. Some of

these were partially eaten by the priests, some were shared between the Lord and the offerer, and so on.

The “various washings” included washings by the people, by the priests, and even of the sacrifices – all accomplished according to laws prescribed within the law itself. An example for the people would be the washing of oneself after touching the carcass of anything. That is seen in Leviticus 11. An example of a priestly washing would, according to the ordination rites for priests, be found in Exodus 40:12. An example of washing the sacrifices is that of washing the entrails of a burnt offering in Leviticus 1:13. There is seemingly an innumerable number of such washings recorded for various reasons.

These are the “fleshly ordinances” (note that the word “and” is not in the original Greek. It is superfluous and should be omitted. This simply describes the previous thoughts and is not a separate thought). They did nothing to change the people internally, and they were merely symbolic parables looking forward to their fulfillment in Christ. To understand that, literally, every single detail of these things points to the Person and work of Jesus Christ, take the next year or so and watch all of the Superior Word sermons in order from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. You will see how these fleshly ordinances look to spiritual truths revealed in Christ.

From there, the author says that they were “imposed until the time of reformation.” The word “time” here is *kairos*. It signifies a particular point in time marked as “the right moment.” God instituted the law in order to effect certain understandings into the minds of the people. However, the law was never meant as a means to an end, except concerning its fulfillment in Christ. Once that was accomplished, then the “time of reformation” could come about. The word translated as “reformation” is one which indicates “to straighten thoroughly.” It is a straightening of something to its natural condition. In this case, it is speaking of the messianic restoration of all things. For those who trust in Christ, that restoration is realized in the sense that all of these shadows practiced under the law are actually accomplished for us in His work. However, such has not yet occurred for Israel. That time lies yet ahead.

These rituals went on, with periods of interruption during the exile and at other times, for about 1500 years. Eventually, though, Christ came and fulfilled His ministry – a ministry which replaced all of these temporary regulations forever. After His fulfillment of the law, there was an overlap of time where the temple still stood in Jerusalem. That finally ended in AD 70 at the destruction of the temple. However, according to Daniel 9:24-27, there are still seven more years offered to the nation of Israel for them to “finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy” (Daniel 9:24, NIV). Even now, the people have prepared the implements for temple worship and each year they attempt to conduct sacrifices on the Temple Mount. In time, it will occur as prophesied. Sadly, they’ve missed the fact that these rituals point to the Person of Jesus.

Life application: Though the time of the reformation spoken of here is realized for the believer in Christ, we have to trust that this is so. Do we accept the premise that we are not required to do the things of the law, or do we fall back on the law (in part or in whole) in an attempt to please God? The Bible says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for all who believe. Is that something we truly accept? If so, then you must not go back to the law in an attempt to please God. Stand fast on Christ’s complete and final fulfillment of everything necessary to reconcile us to God.

Lord, may You open the eyes of the world to the truth of who Jesus is and why He came. We pray especially for the people of Israel who have, for so long, failed to see that their Messiah has already come and that He is even now holding out His hands to them in love. May Christ Jesus be seen for who He truly is, and may many come to a saving knowledge of Him! Amen.

But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Hebrews 9:11

The author now contrasts the earthly sanctuary that he has been describing – meaning its makeup, rituals, offerings, and services – with that of Christ’s. This is evident with the conjunction *de*, translated here as, “But.” In this contrast, he says, “But Christ.”

In this, we have the contrast between the high priest of Israel under the Old Covenant, meaning Aaron and his sons after him, and Jesus, the “Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). He, not Aaron, “came *as* High Priest of the good things to come.” A point of correction: “Of good things to come” is wrong. It is “of good things having come.” One might say, “of the good things realized.” As Vincent’s Word Studies says, it speaks of “Blessings not merely prophetic or objects of hope, but actually attained; free approach to God, the better covenant, personal communion with God, the purging of the conscience.”

Despite the translation, the obvious meaning of this is that what came under the Old Covenant was not “good” in comparison to what has come in Christ. Paul says in Romans 7:12 that “the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” But Paul continues with the words, “Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.”

Now in Hebrews, the author is here making a contrast between the law and the grace found in Christ. The commandment is good, but its outcome – because of sin in man – is not. In Christ though, the outcome far outshines what the law could produce. The law brought death; Christ brings life. The law highlighted sin; Christ removes sin (see Hebrews 10:1). The law demanded a penalty; Christ grants grace and mercy. Such “good things” are not found under the law, but they radiantly shine forth in the New Covenant.

And, along with these great outcomes, the author says that Christ came “with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands.” This is then a contrast to what he has already said about the tabernacle of the first covenant. In Chapter 8, he said, “there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’” (Hebrews 8:4, 5).

What Aaron served at was an earthly tabernacle, and only a “copy and shadow” of a greater and more perfect tabernacle. Whereas that of Aaron was made by human hands, that of Christ is heavenly. It was “not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” This is what Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 –

“For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”

In the fact that what Christ presents is heavenly, we see an undeniable truth. As the sanctuary, the implements in it, the offerings made there, and those who served there – all of it – pointed to Christ, and prefigured Him and His work, and as the author says that all of this is “not of this creation,” then the inescapable truth is that Jesus Christ is not a created being as claimed by cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Though He united with His creation, He is not created. As He is not created, then He must be the Creator, because only the Creator is not created.

Who Christ is, and what He has done for us in the New Covenant, is not just “better than” anything connected with the Old Covenant. Rather, He is infinitely so. There is no comparison which can truly be made between the two when considering both their makeup and their outcome.

Life application: What God established was good and it met its purposes perfectly, which is that we would realize we can never attain righteousness through the law, the temple, or the temple rituals. Rather, Christ fulfilled the law on our behalf, coming “with the greater and more perfect tabernacle.” Consider the glory of God, His absolute splendor. Now imagine how minuscule we are in comparison to creation. In fact, take 6 minutes to watch this video – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17jymDn0W6U>

After this, ask yourself the question David asked so long ago, “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:4). Imagine the Creator of all of this caring so much for you that He united with human flesh and humbled Himself on a cross... all for you. When you are feeling low, useless, or lacking value, please remember that God feels completely the opposite about you. Through Christ, He has called you His precious child.

Lord God, Your word reveals that we have true value to You, if we will but come to You in faith. You possess all of the power displayed in the universe, and even more. And yet You loved us enough that You sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we could be restored to You once again. Surely we have value to You, if we will but come to You in faith. Help us to do so, O God. Amen.

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12

Here, the author is describing the requirements of the Day of Atonement for the high priest of Israel. These requirements are minutely described in Leviticus 16.

The symbolism of Christ fills the entire passage with picture after picture of His work. It is an astonishing study. First, the high priest had to take the blood of a bull (here called a calf) into the Most Holy Place. This was to atone for his own sins. After this, he took the blood of a goat for the sins of the people.

The superiority of what Christ did is seen in the contrasting word *de*, translated here as “but.” Unlike the high priest of Israel, who is acknowledged as a sinner because of the need to offer blood for himself, such is not the case with Christ Jesus. Rather, He is the perfect sacrifice which these animals only pictured, and He entered “with His own blood.” The perfection implied in the animals which were sacrificed was due to an inspection of them first. There was to be no defect in them, and thus they represented Christ in His perfect, unblemished state. In His death, He presented Himself as the sacrificial offering. As it literally says in the Greek, “through however the own blood He entered.”

The Greek word *dia* signifies “through,” “on account of,” or “because of.” It is by the instrumentality of His own blood that He entered the Most Holy Place. It is the same word used in verse 9:11 where Christ went *dia*, or through, the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Here His entering of the Most Holy Place was through His own blood, proving His sinlessness, and thus demonstrating His ability to fully cleanse those for whom His life was given. As it says, “once for all.”

It is the same Greek word used by Paul in Romans 6:10 which says, “For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all.” Christ died once for all, and He entered the Most Holy Place once for all. Unlike the high priest who used an animal, a type of Christ, and who had to repeat the same sacrifices year after year, Christ died once. His death, validated in His shed blood, is fully sufficient to forever cleanse all those who come to Him. It is, when logically considered, the surest proof of the doctrine of eternal salvation. The icing on the cake is that in acceptance of this atoning sacrifice, one is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (Ephesians 1:13, 14). With this understanding of surety, the author finishes with, “having obtained eternal redemption.”

The word translated as “redemption” is found only here and in Luke 1:68 and Luke 2:38. It signifies “the payment of the full *ransom-price* to free a slave – particularly the *redemption* of an individual” (HELPS Word Studies). In other words, the individual so redeemed has been ransomed eternally – the price is paid, and freedom is granted. Vincent’s Word Studies explains the meaning –

“Not mere duration is contemplated, but quality; a redemption answering in its quality to that age when all the conditions of time shall be no more: a redemption not ritual, but profoundly ethical and spiritual.”

Again, the entire verse speaks of a one-time for all-time salvation. It is eternal in scope, and it is never to be repeated. Jesus Christ’s blood does not purchase eternal insecurity, but rather eternal security. The thought here takes us back to what was said in Hebrews 5:8, 9 –

“...though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”

Eternal redemption equates to eternal salvation. The two are met and obtained through faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. To say one can lose what Christ died for is to say that the blood of Christ is a lie. Either the act is sufficient and forever complete, or we have placed our hope in a system which can fail by our own actions, meaning that what we do is greater than what Christ has done. This is impossible.

Life application: The believer in Jesus Christ has no need to worry if he has “lost” his salvation for some heinous sin; it cannot happen. If a person came to Christ by faith and accepted His offer of peace, then he is eternally secure. All people fall, all stumble, all make mistakes, but the blood of Jesus Christ is infinitely more powerful to cleanse than we are to err. He has secured “eternal salvation” and “eternal redemption” for His people. Both Peter and Paul state that we “have” been redeemed. Paul says in Ephesians 4:30 that the Holy Spirit has sealed us for

the day of redemption. If the two apostles say we “have” been redeemed and then Paul says we are sealed “for” the day of redemption, and Hebrews says that we have “eternal redemption,” then it logically follows that we are potentially redeemed now and that this will be actualized at a future date. It also means it can never be lost. Praise be to God that Jesus Christ’s blood was presented on our behalf! The perfect for the imperfect – what an honor to be called by the name of Jesus!

Lord Jesus, we have failed you a million times and we loathe our failings, but there is no fear that You have turned from us, nor that You ever will. We are assured of the glorious promise of Your eternal redemption obtained for us on the cross of Calvary. When You said, “It is finished,” we can trust that it is so. Praises belong to You, O Christ! Amen.

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, Hebrews 9:13

This verse initiates a thought which will continue through the next verse as well. And then, after that, it will be settled in verse 9:15. However, it is tied to the previous words with the connector, “For.” Thus, what is presented is explanatory of what has been stated in verse 12 where it said that Christ has obtained for us “eternal redemption.” With that in his view, he will have the thoughts tied together at the end of verse 9:15 using the words, “that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

In other words, the “eternal redemption,” leads to obtaining the “eternal inheritance.” With that in view, and to get us to that point, he now says, “For if the blood of bulls and goats.” This takes us back to the explanation of the Day of Atonement which was just described in verse 12. However, the thought certainly extends to other sacrifices as well where the same animals were used in other rituals. This is all the more certain based on the next words which say, “and the ashes of a heifer.”

The ashes of a heifer were not used on the Day of Atonement. Rather, how they were obtained, and the purpose they served, is found in Numbers 19. In verses 1-10 the process of obtaining these ashes is described. In verse 9, it says that these are for “purifying from sin.” This is then more fully explained in verses 11-13 –

“He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. ¹² He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; *then* he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. ¹³ Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness *is* still on him.” Number 19:11-13

As is seen, these ashes were for “sprinkling the unclean.” It is an outward cleansing of the flesh, but it actually does nothing to purify the person in their heart and soul. Like the other rites and rituals encountered throughout the law, this simply “sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh.”

As can be seen, the author is setting up a contrast where he demonstrates the inferiority of the sacrificial system of the Law of Moses. Though he only mentions a few here, there were various animals that were used for those rituals – lambs, goats, bulls, doves, and even a red heifer’s ashes. Each served a particular purpose and some could serve several purposes, but they all had one thing in common – they only made the people outwardly clean, and most of these purifications were simply symbolic in nature. In some, hyssop was dipped into the blood or other mixture and then it was sprinkled on the people. This was done as a reminder of their unclean state in the presence of God. Some of these cleansings, such as in the case of the ashes of the red heifer, took seven full days to be accomplished, but they were still only external rites of purification.

Such outward cleansings were only a foreshadowing of the greater work of Jesus and His shed blood. Peter uses such terminology in the greeting of his first epistle, applying it to the true cleansing power of Jesus –

“...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:2

Life application: People who want to please God through works of the law are attempting to have it both ways. First, they want to appear more holy and pious through external rites, like not eating pork. “Oh, I am way better than you because I don’t eat that dirty flesh of swine.” But yet, in their attempt to supposedly be clean in this way, they don’t observe any of the blood or sprinkling rituals required under that same law. Not one person in 2000 years has done this. And so their attempt to be symbolically clean, by not doing one thing, is entirely negated by not doing another. Epic fail. Do not follow such people, but come to the Fount of true cleansing. Come to Christ Jesus who is the fulfillment of all of these mere types and shadows. Indeed – Come to Christ.

Thank You Lord God for the more perfect cleansing we have in the precious blood of Jesus, without which we stand unclean and condemned. Help us to remember always the high cost of our atonement and purification, and to accept it with humility, knowing we don’t deserve the least of Your favor. Amen.

...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:14

These words contrast what was just stated in the previous verse. The author had started to pose the question, “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh...” Now he asks a contrasting question beginning with “how much more shall the blood of Christ.”

The rites of the Old Covenant were symbolic in nature, and they were simply external rites intended to purify externally. Further, this was done with sacrificial animals. They are brute beasts, and in a completely different category than a human being. Thus, they were actually ineffectual in doing anything more than symbolically representing what lay ahead in Christ. This will be made explicit in Chapter 10. However, under the New Covenant, Christ's blood was shed.

He was (and is) innocent, He is in the same category (being human), and He voluntarily gave Himself in exchange for the sins of others. The supremacy of Christ's work is on a completely different level. Further, this offering was made "through the eternal Spirit." The Greek has no definite article, and – though debated among scholars – it is most likely not speaking of the Holy Spirit, who is never designated this way in Scripture. Thus it should more likely read, "through an eternal spirit."

The word *dia*, or through, is used to convey the thought that Christ offered Himself through His nature as a human being, set apart unto holiness. To understand the contrast between the animals offered and the offering of Christ, one can refer to the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:21 –

"Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?"

The spirit of man is contrasted to that of the animals in Ecclesiastes, and that is built upon by the author of Hebrews here by comparing the "blood of bulls and goats" (9:13) to "the blood of Christ" (9:14). To this thought is added that of the perfection of Christ as has been detailed in the gospels, explained in the epistles, and which has continued to be minutely detailed here in the book of Hebrews. It is this eternal Spirit by which Christ existed, performed His earthly role, gave His life, and was resurrected to never die again. That is contrasted to a mere animal which lives as an animal, dies as an animal, and which is then gone from the stream of existence. It is through this eternal Spirit by which Christ "offered Himself without spot to God."

The words, “without spot,” speak of perfection. In the Mosaic Law, animals were inspected for purity. If there was any spot or blemish on them, they were not to be sacrificed for the sins of the people. However, the record of Christ’s life shows that He was (and is) perfect in all ways. Thus, the sacrifice of Himself “to God” was perfectly acceptable to accomplish the fulfillment of all of the rites and rituals which symbolically only looked forward to His perfection. This is recorded, explicitly, by Peter –

“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:17-19

And so, with understanding this infinite difference in the blood that is shed by Christ, we can complete the question the author is proposing. If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more can the contrasting shed blood of Christ “cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The answer must be “completely and wholly.” It is a one-time for all-time cleansing. Nothing can undo it, and it is fully sufficient to carry the one who receives His offering past the cherubim, through the veil, and into God’s paradise once again. All of the symbolism of the sanctuary looked forward to Christ’s coming, and His work of restoring us – once and forever – to God.

Life application: In Chapter 5 of the book of Romans, Paul says five times “much more” concerning the superlative work of Christ in regards to how it brings us near to God once again. Christ Jesus is superior to all things in all ways, including those blood sacrifices of the Old Testament. The people were outwardly cleansed by their participation in Old Covenant services, but with Christ, we are cleansed both outwardly and inwardly – from our dead works. Any sin causes separation from God and, therefore, man stands utterly condemned in the presence of pure holiness. But Christ placed Himself in the gap and presented His blood on our behalf. God accepted this and we now have complete peace with Him, if only we

accept by faith what Jesus did. Are you ready to stop trying to please God on your own merits and good deeds and simply hand your life over to Christ? In Him, there is complete healing and restoration. Or, if you've come to Christ, are you still consciously carrying around the guilt of past sins? Let them go! We don't want to forget where we've come from or the place we once were, but we also don't need to continually bear the weight of our sins which have been washed away. Instead, have peace that Jesus Christ has truly – once and for all – cleared our guilty consciences and taken away the stains. And then... give a shout? Whoo hoo!

Lord God Almighty, we are cleansed – wholly, completely, and forever – through the shed blood of Christ. And so why, Lord, do we continually bring up our past sin which has been purified and forgiven through His work? Help us to never forget where we came from, but help us to know for sure that we are freed from what we did while we were there. In Christ, there is life anew! Let us never assume that our sins were of greater magnitude than the cleansing power of Christ. Amen.

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:15

The author has just shown the superiority of the shed blood of Christ over that of the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant. Christ's offering was one which was fully capable of cleansing those who come to Him. And that blood was not taken into an earthly sanctuary, but into "the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands" (9:11). Through this offering, the author then said that, in that Most Holy Place, He obtained for His people "eternal redemption." In this understanding, he now says, "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant." In what was presented in those previous verses, it is evident that Jesus Christ is the One, only, and true "Mediator."

What Aaron and his descendants did was merely typical of the work of Christ, but it was actually ineffective in bringing about reconciliation between God and man. Instead, it only anticipated what Christ would do when He introduced “the new covenant.” As a new covenant is introduced, it shows that the old was temporary and anticipatory. If there was no fault in the old, there would be no need for a new (see verse 8:7). But there was fault (sin in man) which required the fulfillment of the old through a perfect Man. The surety of His perfection was determined “by means of death.”

The logic is that even though perfect and without sin, until Christ died, He could not be considered perfect in death. What if He violated the law just before dying? But in death, the record of man is set, once and for all. The death validated the life of perfection. This is why Christ’s death was necessary. First, it validated His perfection, and then secondly, it was suitable “for the transgressions under the first covenant.”

Along with the two points just mentioned, it is hard to even comprehend how much else is involved in what Jesus did. The words look forward to those who accept His work after the cross and also back on those who lived by faith under the Old Covenant system. Violations of the law must be atoned for, even just one. This is because breaking any part of the law results in breaking the entire law (James 2:10).

As the sins of the first covenant were only potentially atoned for in Christ until He came, it shows that Christ is truly the only Mediator between God and man. This is stated explicitly in 1 Timothy 2:5 and it excludes any other – such as Mary, whom Roman Catholicism accepts as a co-equal mediatrix. Such heresy must be addressed because a prayer to or through Mary (or anyone else) is an ineffective prayer; a reliance on anyone but Jesus is a lost hope. It is through Jesus alone “that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

The overall scope of what occurred in Christ’s work is both more effective, and broader in range, than that of the Old Covenant system. “Those who are called” are any from Israel under the Old Covenant, and those who come to Christ under

the New. It is the final, finished, and fully sufficient work of Christ that is the guarantee for both that they “may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. None under the Old could receive it apart from Christ, and in the introduction of the New, none will receive it apart from Christ. Christ alone is the way to reconciliation with God, for all people and at all times.

Life application. It was said above that in death, the record of man is set, once and for all. As this is true, it shows that any person can come to Christ at any time before his death, and in that act, he is granted Christ’s perfection. In this, he then receives the promise of the eternal inheritance. For those who come to Christ many years before death, they are at that time granted His sinless perfection. After that, as sin is no longer imputed in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19), they are deemed as perfect from that point on, even until death. And for the one who calls on Christ a moment before dying, he too is imputed Christ’s perfection, and he moves from death to life. No person who comes to Christ will be lost.

Lord God, keep our hearts, thoughts, and minds focused on Jesus and His work. Protect us from heresy which can only take our eyes off the Prize which is Jesus alone. When we stray from Your precepts, send us correction that we may always be pleasing in Your eyes. Amen!

For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. Hebrews 9:16

Note: It is highly debated whether this should read “testament” or “covenant.” Some translations state, “will,” to reflect the idea of a testament. The fact that the author’s entire thought has been concerning the covenant previously enacted and described, and that this is addressed to the Hebrews, among whom the covenant was made, and to whom the New Covenant is being introduced, the term “covenant” is certainly the author’s intent. He has been speaking of the sacrificial animals, typical of Christ, and now he turns to the main Subject, Christ, as the sacrifice – proved by His death.

Noted scholars on both sides of the issue give their cases for which word is correct, but in a study of both sides, the surety that “covenant” is appropriate is realized. To see this, scholars such as Charles Ellicott and Albert Barnes (among others) should be referred to. The entire thought, both before this verse and in the words to come, demonstrate that the author is referring to the introduction of the New Covenant, not the receiving of an inheritance. Young’s Literal Translation rightly says, “for where a covenant is, the death of the covenant-victim to come in is necessary.” If your translation says, “testament,” or “will,” make a margin note. It should read, “covenant.” With that understood, the author says, “For.”

It is speaking of those things he has said to this point concerning the introduction of the New Covenant as a replacement for the Old Covenant. This was highlighted by the words of the previous verse which say, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant.” Understanding this, he says, “For where there *is* a [covenant].”

This is speaking of the New Covenant which is introduced as a replacement of the Old. Of this, there can be no doubt. As a New Covenant is being introduced, “there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” To ensure what is said is properly understood, we will stick with Young’s usage and say, “the death of the covenant-victim.”

In order to establish a covenant, there must be a death which solidifies the making of the covenant. This was seen in the covenant made with Abraham –

“So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.” Genesis 15:9, 10

This was seen in the Mosaic Covenant –

“Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶ And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.” ⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.” Exodus 24:5-8

Even Jeremiah refers to this practice in Jeremiah 34:18. Death was called for at the introduction of these covenants, in order to ratify what was being covenanted. This is what is being spoken of now in Hebrews. Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant, and then He instituted the New Covenant. And what did He Himself say concerning this? It is recorded in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22 – which Paul substantially repeats in 1 Corinthians 11. Christ said on the night before His crucifixion, “This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

In fact, Paul goes on to explain this with the words –

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.”

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26

The case of correct terminology is settled in the idea of “covenant” by the words of the Lord, and through the hand of both Paul and the author of Hebrews (be it Paul or another). The Lord died in order to introduce a New Covenant. We take the Lord’s Supper to acknowledge that fact, and in honor of what He has done. It is He who is the covenant-victim who died to grant us the grace of God in Himself.

Life application: As is seen, and as is recorded in Scripture, the death of Jesus Christ accomplished two opposing things at the same time. First, He died in fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and secondly, He died to initiate the New Covenant. Jesus' death was necessary for there to be a New Covenant. This is because the first covenant was already in place and was sealed, as will be seen in the coming verses. Only a more perfect Sacrifice could replace the Old Covenant where the blood used for it was ordained by God as befitting such an agreement. Therefore, only a more perfect blood – that of a sinless Man – could replace what was in effect. Hence, Jesus' perfect, sinless life was given to nullify the Old Covenant and establish the New. As Paul noted in his directions, when we participate in the Lord's Supper, we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." This is one of only two mandated ordinances in the Bible – the other being baptism. If you have never participated in baptism, or if you don't frequently participate in the Lord's Supper, make a commitment today to do so.

Lord God, for those of us who have called on Jesus as Lord, may we be responsible, obedient followers by being baptized as You have so commanded us; and then may we regularly partake in the Lord's Supper as we have been instructed in Your word. If we fail to do these simple things, then are we truly being obedient to You? May we walk in accord with Your precepts, and be faithful disciples all our days. Amen.

For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Hebrews 9:17

Again, as in the previous verse, the word "testament" is not correct. This has not been, is not, and will not be the subject of the discussion. It is a "covenant" which is being referred to. A proper translation of these words would be, "for a covenant over dead victims is steadfast, since it is no force at all when the covenant-victim liveth" (Young's Literal Translation). It is with this proper translation that the words will be evaluated.

As it says, “for a covenant over dead victims is steadfast.” The words in Greek literally read, “for a covenant over death.” In other words, a covenant is made over the death which occurred. From there, that covenant was in force, and it remained that way. The covenant was cut, the animals were slaughtered, and the agreement was made in the sprinkling of the blood, proving the death which sealed the covenant. If a new covenant were to be introduced, it would supersede the old one. This is why the author firmly stated in verse 7:18 that the “former regulation is set aside,” and in verse 8:13 that “he has made the first one obsolete.”

However, the first could neither be set aside, nor made obsolete, while the covenant-victim of the coming covenant was alive. As Young’s says, “since it is no force at all when the covenant-victim liveth.” This was true with the Old Covenant. It had no power at all until the covenant-victims were slaughtered. And it is true with the New Covenant as well. In order for the New Covenant to come into effect, the covenant-victim, in this case Christ Jesus, had to die. The author will spend the next several verses speaking about this process, and he will finish the chapter with the thought of Christ’s death and what it means for those who have received Him.

In this regard, the idea of a will is like that of a covenant. Can you imagine standing in a court with a superseded will, knowing it to be so, and arguing why it should be accepted and the newer one rejected? If all was in order with the newer will, the court could find no reason for your argument and your case would be dismissed. How much more, then, should we accept that God, as a fully competent Executor of the New Covenant, has ordained that we live by that same New Covenant which He provided at the cost of His own beloved Son!

Clinging to the Law of Moses is actually an indication that one has failed to trust the promises and benefits of the New Covenant established over the death of the Lord. Hebrews, above all other books of the New Testament, makes the point absolutely clear that we are living under new guidelines and with better precepts. To reinstitute dietary laws, mandatory tithing, or any other precept from the law is to live by “another gospel” than that which has been proclaimed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Life application: We need to be exceedingly careful that if we follow precepts which were mandated under the Mosaic Covenant, it is because of our freedom in Christ and not because of a belief that we are somehow justified by our actions. Further, we are never (times infinity, plus one) to teach another person that they must adhere to a precept found in the obsolete and replaced Law of Moses. We are to teach the grace of Jesus Christ, and the principles laid out in the New Testament which are based on that.

Heavenly Father – You alone know our failings and the areas where our doctrine is weak and ineffective. Transform our thinking to be in line with the precepts and guidelines that You have carefully and clearly laid out for us in the pages of Your word, the Holy Bible. And may those precepts and guidelines be in accord with the New Covenant of grace, found in Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood.

Hebrews 9:18

The words here are based on the facts presented in verses 9:16 and 9:17. Because a covenant requires the death of a covenant-victim, and because a covenant only has force after the death of that covenant-victim, there must be blood presented to prove the death of the covenant-victim. That is the basis for the word, “Therefore.” From there, the author then explains the necessity of blood with the words, “not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood.”

Here, the first covenant is speaking of the Mosaic Covenant, not the Abrahamic Covenant. Though both were dedicated through the death of covenant-victims, it is the covenant which came through Moses which is being referred to right now. That will be made explicit in the next verse.

This verse actually settles the issue as to which translation is correct in the previous verses where some say “testament,” and some say “covenant.” The issue all along has been referring to the covenant of Christ in comparison to the

covenant through Moses. Thus, translations which say, “testament,” are wrong and require a pen and ink note with the correct terminology.

As a point of biblical theology, the term “scarlet thread” is used by some to indicate the symbolism which permeates the Bible concerning the need for substitutionary atonement. Substitutionary atonement is a big term, but one which is easily explained. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. This means that a person must die for sin in their life – both original sin and sin committed in life. However, a substitute may die in place of the offender. From the first pages of the Bible in Genesis, until the last book of Revelation, this concept is held to and never deviated from. Either we die in our own sin, eternally separated from God, or a substitutionary life is given on our behalf. When Adam and Eve fell, God provided the offering on their behalf –

“Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”
Genesis 3:21

When humans from all ages face God at the great white throne judgment, the same concept will apply –

“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”
Revelation 21:27

In the Genesis account, an innocent animal was killed to “cover” Adam and Eve, thus symbolizing the covering of their sins. It was a foreshadowing of the true Substitution found in Christ. In the Revelation account, it is the “Lamb’s Book of Life” which records those who have received His substitutionary atonement – either looking forward to Messiah, or looking back on what He has done. Jesus’ death is the only true covering for fallen man. This is the scarlet thread which is poetically referred to concerning the blood of the Substitute. It all points to Christ.

Life application:

- 1) Don't get stuck on one translation of the Bible. Your theology will always suffer by following this unscholarly approach to Bible study.
- 2) Anyone who has not personally accepted Jesus' work will be eternally condemned. It is a sacrifice of God's choosing, not ours, which is acceptable. If you are relying on the sacrifices of donations, good deeds, or right living to please God, you've missed the mark...condemnation awaits. Trust in Jesus alone today.

O God, open our eyes to the simplicity of Your gospel of peace. May we not stumble over it in our attempts to please You through our own works and lose our souls in the process. May we readily receive the grace revealed in the sacrifice of Jesus which opens the door of restoration and healing for us. And it is in His glorious and beautiful name we pray. Amen.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, Hebrews 9:19

The words now give a general description of the rites associated with the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant as has been discussed in verses 9:16-18. "For when Moses" shows that the author has been referring specifically to the Mosaic Covenant. His words have not been speaking of either a "will" or a "testament," but a covenant. At that time, "Moses had spoken every precept to all the people." That is seen in Exodus 24:6, which will be cited below. The words he read out to the people were "according to the law." In other words, he read the agreement which was to be ratified between the Lord and the people, openly and fully. There was nothing hidden from their ears concerning the covenant.

After that, “he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the book itself and all the people.” The details here do not specifically match what was stated in Exodus 24. For example, it only says “oxen” were sacrificed as burnt and peace offerings. However, the term, “calves and goats,” could be a simple all-inclusive idiom. Or, it could be that the goats were part of an unrecorded sin-offering. Further, the mixture of water, scarlet wool, and hyssop is not specifically referred to in Exodus 24. This doesn’t mean Moses didn’t do this, but rather that it is simply unrecorded. In this, the author is detailing what was known to have occurred.

As an explanation of these things, the mixture mentioned included –

- 1) The blood of calves and goats. This indicates that young and innocent lives were sacrificed to seal the covenant when accepted by the people. The exact animals, and how they point to Christ, are discussed in the corresponding Superior Word sermons.

- 2) The water. This was mixed into the blood as a foreshadowing of the blood and water that came from Christ’s side –

“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” John 19:34

- 3) The scarlet wool. This points to Jesus’ sacrifice and the cleansing it provides

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’
Says the Lord,
‘Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.’” Isaiah 1:18

4) The hyssop. This is a plant similar to mint and was symbolic of the cleansing power of Jesus. David uses the terminology of such cleansing –

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Psalm 51:7

The procedure Hebrews is alluding to is mentioned in the book of Exodus, and the mental picture it provides is sobering –

“And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.’ ⁸ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.’” Exodus 24:6-8

Even the people were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant. This made it binding on them as they said, “we will do, and be obedient.” However, as Paul states elsewhere –

“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’” Galatians 3:11

As you can see, the people promised something they could never fulfill. God knew this, but in His great mercy He provided a covering for them each year on the Day of Atonement; a day which looked ahead to its fulfillment in Jesus.

Life application: The rites of the Old Covenant continually looked forward to their fulfillment in Christ Jesus. They were only types and shadows of what was to come in Him. They actually did nothing but anticipate His fulfillment of these things. To understand what has only been briefly discussed in this verse’s commentary, go back and watch all of the Superior Word sermons in the Pentateuch. You will have

a well-rounded understanding of the typology presented there, as well as its fulfillment in Christ.

Lord God, looking at the intricacies of Your plan of redemption, we can see the absolute wisdom in all You have done, and the glory of the promises which are yet ahead for those who have come to You in faith through Christ. Truly, we stand in awe of this plan – from Genesis to Revelation. Glory and praises – they surely belong to You! Amen.

...saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.”
Hebrews 9:20

This continues what was stated in the previous verse. The author explained what rites were accomplished in the cutting of the covenant at Sinai, and now he shows what words accompanied the rite of sprinkling. It is speaking of Moses’ ratification of the Old Covenant. Moses was given specific directions about every single thing he was to do and how he was to do it. When he did something, he did it speaking as an appointed instrument, subordinate to the One who appointed him. As it says, “which God has commanded.”

The fact that God directed all things to be done, and that He also commanded the people within the covenant itself, shows that the covenant is one between a Superior and subordinates. The people agreed to accept the leadership of the Lord, and to do those things which He determined should be done. This then was ratified in the blood of covenant-victim. However, there is a difference between what occurred at Sinai, and what occurred in Christ.

When Jesus gave the New Covenant, it was on His own authority: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

This is similar to when prophets of old spoke or acted –

“When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. ³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord.” 2 Kings 4:32, 33

Elisa prayed to the Lord for restoration of the dead. However, Jesus spoke and acted under His own authority –

“Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ ¹⁵ So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.” Luke 7:14, 15

Life application: The supremacy of Christ is a concept which has been and will continue to be analyzed in the book of Hebrews, sometimes subtly as in the verse looked at in this commentary. Jesus is “greater than” in all ways because He is the incarnation of the LORD Jehovah. The Old Testament conceals Him; the New reveals Him. Don’t miss the mark by worshiping a false Christ found in a false gospel, such as the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” of today do. Theirs is an ancient heresy going back to a man named Arius which has continued to infect right doctrine throughout the ages. Further, when verses speak of keeping the Lord’s commandments (such as 1 John 2:3, 4), it is referring to the commands of the Lord within the New Covenant context. It cannot be speaking of the Law of Moses, because that law is obsolete and set aside. This is an even older heresy put forth by Judaizers, which is warned about in Paul’s New Testament epistles, especially Galatians. Be aware of the deceit of such false doctrines. Worshiping incorrectly because of belief in a false Christ can only end in death and condemnation.

Lord God, You have set us free from the bondage of our sin and from the bondage of the law which highlights our sin, through the blood of Christ. We can worship You in a way never possible before because of what Jesus did first. Help us to always hold fast to the glorious truth of the gospel which brings freedom from bondage, and also full fellowship with You. Help us to always walk in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. Hebrews 9:21

After receiving the covenant from God, Moses slaughtered an animal and sprinkled the blood on the altar which had been erected. After that, he read the Book of the Covenant in the hearing of the people. Once that was completed, the people proclaimed, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7). From there, he sprinkled the blood on the people, thus binding them to the words they uttered.

In this verse, it is noted that Moses likewise “sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.” It is not explicitly noted in Moses’ writings that the tabernacle (literally, the tent) was sprinkled with blood. It was, however, sprinkled with anointing oil as is indicated in Exodus 40. In Exodus 29, it is seen that, for the consecration of Aaron and his sons, they and their garments were to be sprinkled with the oil and with the blood that was on the altar as well. Thus, it was probable that the same procedure with blood was a part of the Exodus 40 sprinkling, though not specifically mentioned –

“And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that *is* in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy. ¹⁰You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy. ¹¹And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it.” Exodus 40:9-11

A great deal of work went into making all of these things, and many of them were made of fabric which was extremely beautiful, such as the garments of Aaron and his sons. Here is a part of their description –

“And these *are* the garments which they shall make: a breastplate an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, that he may minister to Me as priest. ⁵ They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and the fine linen, ⁶ and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, *and* scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, artistically worked. ⁷ It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and so it shall be joined together. ⁸ And the intricately woven band of the ephod, which *is* on it, shall be of the same workmanship, *made of* gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen.” Exodus 28:4-8

The actual detail of the workmanship in these garments goes on for many more verses. After all of this care and attention, Moses sprinkled them with blood. This would have permanently stained those things which were made of fabric. This was a lesson that everything on earth was tainted at the fall, including the people. Therefore, to symbolize their corrupt nature and their need for atonement, they were sprinkled with blood to symbolically purify them.

This is actually what Peter is referring to in the opening words of his first epistle –

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:
Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” 1 Peter 1:1, 2

Life application: What does God see when He looks at you? If He sees you without the covering of Christ’s sacrifice, He looks upon you in wrath, because – by your very nature – you are a child of wrath. But if He looks upon the blood of His Son

sprinkled on you, then you have moved to a propitious place of favor! As those things of the Old Covenant only anticipated Christ, why would anyone consider going back under it? The blood which was sprinkled was only effective in how it looked forward to Calvary's cross. The law, which included the sprinkling of animal blood, did nothing to truly cleanse the people. Only in Christ does that occur.

O God, Your word says that the blood of Jesus can cleanse our souls. It can take away all stain of sin. Now we can stand righteous in Your presence, but not because of our own goodness. Rather, it is because of the righteousness of Christ. It is in Christ alone that we are washed and cleansed! Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Hebrews 9:22

The idea is better expressed by the NAS, which says, "And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

There are exceptions where purification takes place apart from blood, but the overall idea of purification is that things "are purified with blood." This is a general statement covering what has been said in the previous verses. The blood purifies because the blood testifies to the death of the covenant-victim. In such a case, that death must take place in order to ratify the covenant. Because of this, and because sin is dealt with through the giving of such a covenant, "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

With this absolutely stated, it should be reexplained that though it is true that there is no remission without the shedding of blood, it is also true that not all shed blood can atone for sin. Rather, the blood shed under the Old Covenant (except for Christ's fulfillment of it) merely anticipated Christ. Hebrews 10:4 will

explicitly state that the blood of the animals sacrificed for sin could not take away that sin. Thus, it is an ineffectual, anticipatory, and merely typical system of sacrifices.

Further, no other shed human blood can atone for sins. This is because of the stain of original sin in man. All have sinned and, therefore, it is impossible that a sin-filled sacrifice could atone for the sins of another. This is true even with supposedly innocent babies which were sacrificed on altars throughout Israel's history (based on the practices of surrounding nations). God rejected those sacrifices because original sin existed in them already. It was inherited from their first father, Adam. If these babies did not have sin, then they would have resurrected after being sacrificed, because "the wages of sin is death."

But only Christ resurrected. This proves that only Christ's blood can truly remit sins. To sacrifice another for sin, such as a baby, a young virgin, one's own sibling, and etc, is simply committing an act of murder. They already had sin, they died in sin, and there was no atonement for the one who sacrificed that person in hopes of being purified from sin.

Life application: There are certain verses in the Bible that one would do well to remember because they carry key doctrine. When using such verses while discussing the gospel, salvation, sin, atonement, substitution, and many other major points, they will shed light on the subject matter. Hebrews 9:22 is one such verse. Many churches will no longer speak about the blood atonement mentioned in the Bible. But God's word proclaims the necessity of shedding blood to atone for sin and – as clearly as could ever be stated – this verse avers "without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is not those things cherished by many in today's world which save. The bald guy on TV is completely wrong when he jangles a handful of gold and says, "This is the sound of security; this is the sound of gold." When the gold is gone, those who trusted in it will be condemned for their misplaced trust. Rather, it is only through the precious blood of Christ that atonement for sin can be made. Don't miss this key point. When God looks at a faithful believer, He sees the death of His Son and His shed blood – the Just for the unjust. Praise God! As is stated in Exodus, so the same truth carries through in us today, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you..."

Lord God, how can it be that You would send Jesus to the cross in our place? We have failed you since birth, and each day we continue to fall short of Your glory. And yet, You opened Your heart to us, giving us the precious blood of Christ as our atonement. Thank You for having covered us with His perfect righteousness. Glory belongs to You alone! Amen.

Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. Hebrews 9:23

The word, “Therefore,” is given based on everything mentioned in the previous seven verses concerning the shedding of the blood of the covenant-victim and the purification of the things associated with the tabernacle, its implements, and its rites. Those verses ended with, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” With that understood, he says, “Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens.”

Note: The archaic KJV incorrectly says “patterns” instead of “copies.” This is exactly the opposite of what is occurring. It is the heavenly which is the pattern, and it is the earthly which is a copy. See Exodus 25:9 and Hebrews 8:5. If you use this version, a margin note correcting the error is necessary.

These “copies of the things in the heavens,” meaning the earthly tabernacle and associated implements, “should be purified with these.” The word “these” is speaking of the blood of purification obtained from the covenant-victims. There was defilement in these earthly things, and they required a sacrifice of atonement to cover their defilement. However, this entire process was only typical of Christ’s greater work. As the author notes, “but the heavenly things.” That is referring to those things associated with the true and more perfect tabernacle in heaven which is the pattern for the earthly copies. These are purified “with better sacrifices than these.”

First, the word “sacrifices” is plural. Though Christ died once (see Romans 6:10 and Hebrews 9:26), the author’s intent is to show that His single sacrifice is the fulfillment of all of the various types of sacrifices found under the Old Covenant, and which were typical of His one-time sacrifice. Everything of the past which foreshadowed Christ is summed up in His one act. Secondly, this raises an obvious question – “Why would the heavenly things require sacrifices for purification?” Scholars debate this, and several interesting suggestions have been proposed, but which miss the fact that these are spiritual realities in heaven, not physical things.

Under the Old Covenant, the author has already said that all things were sprinkled with blood in order to purify them, including the people (9:19). As we are the purpose of Christ’s coming, meaning the redemption of man, then it is necessary that we be purified by Christ’s shed blood. Christ presented Himself before the Father to purify those things which will be accepted into His eternal realm – His people, who are being built into “a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22).

Though Ephesians is written to the Gentile led church and Hebrews is written to the Hebrew people, the same truth applies to both. A purification is being accomplished in us which was only prefigured in the earthly sanctuary of the Old Covenant.

Life application: The Bible tells of the heavenly dwelling – perfect in all ways, but entrance to it comes at a cost – “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Revelation 21:27). In order to be accepted into God’s paradise, one must be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. To reject His gracious sacrifice is to remain outside of God’s favor and outside of His eternal dwelling. Come to Christ, be purified through His shed blood, and be reconciled to God once and for all eternity.

Glorious! O God, You are glorious. You have given us access to You once again through the blood of the Lamb. If we are willing to accept the truth of Your word, and to come to You through Christ Jesus, we shall be reconciled to You for all eternity. You have done it all, and You ask us to simply believe. How gracious You are to Your people! Thank You, O God! Amen.

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
Hebrews 9:24

The word, “For,” explains what was said in the previous verse concerning “the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” being purified. The purification that Christ brought about will be explained through the end of the chapter, but the final point of it is found in verse 9:28 which says that “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.” This is the ultimate point of the sacrificial system. Sin is the problem, shed blood (proving the death of the covenant-victim) was what was ordained to atone for sin. The types and shadows of the Levitical priesthood in regards to this only looked forward to the actual work of Christ.

The Levitical priests entered into an earthly sanctuary, but it says that “Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands.” Thus, the earthly, physical sacrifices which were conducted by the Levitical priests were an inferior type of sacrifice conducted in an inferior place. What they did simply prefigured Christ. Year by year, the anticipation was that the Messiah would come and fulfill these types and shadows. Finally, He did come. But in the fulfillment of His work, His blood wasn’t presented in these places made with hands, “*which are* copies of the true.”

Again, the author reveals (as he has already done) that the earthly sanctuary was a copy of something greater, something heavenly. As he says, it wasn’t into these copies, “but into heaven itself.” It shouldn’t be supposed that the physical structures that were made are physically seen again in heaven. Rather, the

physical structures represented spiritual realities found in Christ. The colors, shapes, sizes, etc. of all of the things of the sanctuary pointed to spiritual realities.

For example, the type of wood chosen for the Ark of the Covenant pictured the incorruptible nature of Christ's humanity. This doesn't mean the physical nature of His body, but the spiritual incorruption of sinlessness. It is true that the spiritual incorruption then translates into an incorruptible physical body, but it is the spiritually incorrupt nature of Christ which is being conveyed to us. The same is true with all of these physical things. They represented spiritual truths, not corresponding physical things in heaven. The thought then continues in the next words, which say, "now to appear in the presence of God for us."

God is Spirit; He does not have parts. God is. Therefore, Christ's death, in fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant, conveyed a spiritual reality. The sins of those who anticipated Christ under the Mosaic Law were atoned for, once and forever. At the same time, a New Covenant was initiated for those who receive this atonement. All of this is done by Christ in the presence of God. As God is – without change of any kind – then this is a one time and for all time atonement; it is eternal. The author will continue to explain this in the coming verses.

Life application: Christ said during His ministry, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). People misinterpret this verse and teach that the law is still in effect for believers; it is not. The law is in effect for all persons until they come to Christ. When one comes to Christ in faith that He fulfilled the law on their behalf, the law is then set aside and a new law takes effect. This is the purpose of Jesus' death. In one mighty act, Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant, set it aside for believers, and also established the New Covenant. The cross then is God's glorious way of demonstrating His infinite grace, truth, mercy, love, holiness, righteousness, and justice. All of these eternal and unchanging attributes are reconciled at the cross of Jesus. Without this moment, a tension between these attributes remains between God and man, resulting in eternal separation and condemnation. Ensure you understand this! If you misinterpret Jesus' statement concerning the law, you will feel bound to it when in fact you are not. If you misinterpret God's eternal nature, then you will miss the point, and you will

flounder in an ocean of uncertainty. Instead, have faith in Christ and be at peace with God!

What an amazing gift, O God! That you would unite with Your creation in the Person of Jesus in order to reconcile us to You. It's beyond comprehension how glorious You are and we can only shout praises and thanks to You for sending Jesus to reveal that glory in a way in which we can comprehend! Hallelujah and Amen.

...not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— Hebrews 9:25

The High Priest of Israel had to enter the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary once each year and follow the exacting details prescribed in Leviticus 16. Included in these rituals was the presentation of the blood of animals. One was to atone for his sin and one was to atone for the sins of the people. This ritual was absolutely necessary because, as verse 9:22 said, “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” As it says in this verse, He offered his own. This is the idea behind substitutionary atonement – one life is given on behalf of another.

With this understanding, the specific idea of this verse is that of entry into heaven. In other words, though not in the Greek, the idea is connected to the previous verse and should mentally bring to thought, “not that He should *enter to* offer Himself often.” The two verses, placed side by side, will show this –

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

...not that He should enter to offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

Christ gave of Himself once on the cross of Calvary, and at that time He entered into heaven. However, every entry into the Most Holy Place (which was a foreshadowing of Christ's entry into heaven) required that the blood of an individual sacrifice be presented by the high priest. Therefore, if Christ was required to offer Himself every time He entered into heaven, He would have to "offer Himself often." This will be stated explicitly in the next verse to come. Such was not the case though. Unlike the high priest who "enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another," Christ's entry was a one time and for all time presentation.

Life application: In contrast to the annual ritual conducted by Israel's High Priest, Jesus did not enter heaven through a repeated offering of Himself. Please remember that life is forfeit because of sin – either your life, or that of a Substitute. And that Substitute must be acceptable to God. It is by Jesus' death alone that we are reconciled to our heavenly Father. Be sure to receive God's offer of pardon through Christ!

Heavenly Father, Your word tells us that Christ Jesus entered into heaven once for the forgiveness of our sins. He did not need to suffer many times for us, coming again and again with the proof of another time of suffering. He died once for our sins, and that one entry into Your presence was sufficient for all of man's sins from Adam until the end of the age. How powerful is the blood of Christ! May we not fail to receive the gift of eternal life, granted through His one great act on Calvary's cross. Amen.

He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:26

The previous verses said that Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, but heaven itself, and this was "not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another" (9:25). If this

were so, “He then would have had to suffer often.” A repeated entry for purification from sin would necessitate a repeated sacrifice for sin. Thus, every time he entered for sin, he would have to suffer and die, even “since the foundation of the world.”

What this implies is that Christ’s sacrifice, which occurred four thousand years after the foundation of the world, was sufficient to cover the sins of those who anticipated Him in faith even back to the first sin committed since the world was founded. That is why Adam and Eve were covered by the Lord with the tunics of skin which He made for them (Genesis 3:21). It was a symbolic covering of Christ’s righteousness in anticipation of Christ’s coming.

Adam demonstrated faith through the naming of his wife Eve (in anticipation of the coming Messiah and the granting of life once again), and God covered Adam because of that act. Thus, even from the “foundation of the world,” faith in Christ was sufficient to atone for sin. This is then confirmed in the last book of the Bible where Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Peter states the same thing in his first epistle –

“He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ²¹ who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:20, 21

This logic is confirmed, and it is explicitly stated, by the author next with the words, “but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” The author uses the term, “the end of the ages,” to signify the time “when the former ages had reached their moral consummation under the old Levitical economy. Comp. Hebrews 1:2” (Vincent’s Word Studies). This thought is explained by Paul in Galatians –

“Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ² but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:1-5

In His coming in the fullness of time, Christ did not need to suffer repeatedly. God accepts the faith of those who anticipated the coming Messiah, and He accepts the faith of those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah who has come. His sacrifice on Calvary’s cross is a one time and for all time act. To think on what is being described, a review of several thoughts which led up to this verse would be helpful:

- 1) Blood must be shed before forgiveness can be granted; something must die for sin – the sinner because of his sin (this is implied), or a substitute in place of the sinner.
- 2) Blood was required to purify the people, the sanctuary, and all of the implements associated with the rites of the sanctuary.
- 3) Jesus’ sacrifice was not made to purify the earthly sanctuary, nor heaven (which is already pure). It was to provide proof of a substitutionary death on our behalf as a covering for man’s sin.
- 4) Jesus’ sacrifice is once for all time, and it provides eternal cleansing from sin.

All of this demonstrates the superiority of the New Covenant. It also clearly shows that salvation is eternal. No sin committed after salvation can separate the person from God because there is no imputation of sin for one who is in Christ (2

Corinthians 5:19). Once a person is purified, he or she is eternally clean, and thus free from condemnation. Were this not so, as Arminianism teaches, then Christ's blood would be insufficient for any sin.

Life application: Christ suffered once, the godly for the ungodly; the righteous for the unrighteous. There is nothing more that can add righteousness to an individual. His blood, therefore, is fully able to perfect those who have accepted God's offer of peace through Him. As this verse makes abundantly clear, He has appeared "once at the end of the ages ... to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." As Paul jubilantly proclaims –

"For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen." Romans 11:36

O God, from the first sin of man, and throughout all of human history, there has been one, and only one, true Sacrifice for sin – Jesus. Your word is written and proclaims that nothing else is sufficient. The types and shadows of the past are fulfilled in Him, and it is by faith in His coming, or in His having come, that all sin is atoned for. Thank You, O God, that Christ's suffering and death has released us from the penalty of sin, once and forever. Thank You for Jesus our Lord. Amen.

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
Hebrews 9:27

The author, after speaking of Christ's death which was "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," now states something which is considered a biblical axiom. He says, "And it is appointed for men to die once." This was ordained in Genesis 3 after the fall of man. It is an appointment which will be met at the time determined by God, and its effects are final. Further, it is an appointment "for men." Adam is the federal head of man, and all in Adam (male and female) are included in this appointment.

It is true that Scripture records several instances where someone dies and is brought back to life. And it is true that people die today, but they are resuscitated by CPR or in other ways. But what is stated here is no less true.

Those people who died and were brought back to life in the Bible were raised in order to glorify God. They are not exceptions, in the sense that God determined they would die in order for Him to demonstrate His power over death. When a prophet prayed for a dead child (for example, see 2 Kings 4:8-37), he did so in the name of the Lord. It is the Lord who healed. When Jesus came, he raised the dead under His own authority (for example: see John 11:1-44). And, when an apostle raised a dead person (for example: see Acts 4:36-43), he did so under the authority of Christ Jesus. Taken together, it is understood from such accounts that Jesus is the Lord (Yehovah) incarnate. This was the purpose of these displays of raising the dead. Each of these eventually went on to die again in the normal manner.

When a person dies today, and he is later brought back through medical procedures, it cannot be considered a resurrection, but rather a medical healing. There is a point where the body can no longer be resuscitated. At that point, the door is closed and it is final. The only exception in human history, outside of those miraculous restorations intended to bring light to the nature of Christ (to come or in Person), is the resurrection of Christ Himself. But it doesn't change the fact that He died. After His death, His life was judged. God determined that His life was sinless, and He was resurrected. The wages of sin is death; He had no sin; and therefore, it was impossible for death to hold Him (see Acts 2:24).

The word, "once," in this verse is in the emphatic position. The point of the emphasis, and the purpose of the entire thought, is to explain what has been previously submitted in the previous verses. Christ died once, and that death was sufficient for all sin ever committed. He does not have to suffer often, but has put away sin forever through His one all-sufficient atoning death.

Concerning the death of men (meaning all humans), the author continues with, “but after this the judgment.” This is another inescapable aspect of the existence of humanity. We are born, we live, we die, and then there will be a judgment. Christ’s life was judged and He was found without sin. There will be a similar judgment upon all humans. However, there is also the doctrine known as the rapture. That speaks of a time when believers in Christ will be translated to glory without actually physically dying. How can this be, and yet this verse here in Hebrews still be true? The answer to that is found in Paul’s words of Romans 6 –

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:5-11

The judgment spoken of by the author in Hebrews is that of judgment upon sin. It is one which leads to either condemnation or salvation. As believers in Christ have had their sins judged at the cross of Christ, we have “died to sin” through Christ who “died to sin.” We are positionally in Him, and thus we can never spiritually die again. We have died once, and though our body may die physically, we must – it is impossible for it not to happen – resurrect someday to eternal life. For those who are alive at the rapture, they will simply skip the physical death part and they will be translated to their glorified state. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Another point which is tied into this verse concerning death and judgment is that Scripture records two people were translated to heaven without dying – Enoch, the seventh man from Adam, and Elijah the prophet. We can infer from several passages in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) that it is probably these two men who will be back during the tribulation period to witness to the world as stated in Revelation 11:3 –

“And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

However, they will be killed as is recorded in verse 7 of the same chapter. After this, they will be raised to life and taken to heaven in the presence of an unbelieving world. One thing is for certain, neither of these men will be Moses. That would be contrary to the tenor of this verse in Hebrews, but it is still proposed by scholars who incorrectly analyze the verse in order to justify their presupposition that Moses is one of the two witnesses.

In the end, the verse does not bear complication in any of the scenarios above when taken in the context of Scripture, and in light of what God is doing in redemptive history. It is a verse which is absolute in the truths it conveys. The context of seeming exceptions (such as those who are “dead to sin” in Christ being raptured) dispels any thought of the verse being faulty in any way.

Life application: This is an often quoted verse during sermons – and rightfully so! We try our best to not think of death, but it is coming for each and every one of us. Death is awaiting all people and we need to be prepared to meet our Maker. And the duration of our stay, even if not cut short, is not a long one –

“The days of our lives *are* seventy years;
And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years,
Yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Psalm 90:10

In comparison to eternity, seventy or eighty years is utterly insignificant. Are you willing to step out in faith during these brief years and live a life of holiness and honor to Christ Jesus? He paid the greatest price imaginable to save you from condemnation. Consider this and determine today to bring credit and glory to His name during your brief and tenuous stay here! Call on Christ, and you will be – from that point on – dead to sin. Then live out the rest of your days acting as if it is

true. May your life be in accord with the position which God has granted you in His beloved Son.

Lord, as the Psalm says, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Let us not fail You in our duties. Strengthen us to bring Your name the renown that it deserves. Praises, glory, and honor belong to You alone! Amen.

...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Hebrews 9:28

There is an article before "Christ" which is left out of most translations. The Greek reads, "...so the Christ having been offered once." It is speaking of the offering God made, through Christ Jesus as the anointed One of God. This then complements what was stated four times during this chapter where Christ is said to have "offered Himself." There is a harmonious working between the two ideas. God offered the Christ, but Christ also offered Himself. It reveals a perfect agreement within the Godhead concerning what would be accomplished when the Christ was offered by God "once to bear the sins of many."

This offering of the Christ by God for the sins of many indicates that not all will be saved. Though He potentially died for all, the offering actually only applies to those who come to Him. This bearing of the sins of the people was spoken of by Isaiah many centuries earlier –

"Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.

⁶All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:4-6

After His resurrection, Jesus marveled that those who saw Him crucified, and then who heard of the resurrection, had failed to understand the very words of Isaiah and the other prophets who spoke of these things –

“Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Luke 24:25-27

The law itself pointed to the coming work of Christ, demonstrating that the law needed something more in order for the people to be truly reconciled to God. In other words, if the law spoke of the need of such things, then the law was only an anticipatory step towards something greater which was still yet ahead. For those who accept this, they have a better hope than the law could ever provide. The author explains this as he closes out the chapter with the words, “To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Here we have the better hope found in Christ, and which is seen by placing verses 27 and 28 side by side –

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

28 – so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many /// To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Men have an appointment with death. At some point after that, they will receive the judgment of God. As all have sinned, there must be judgment on that sin. As the law was unable to cure the sin problem, without something more, all would remain under sin and, thus, all would be condemned. That is why, even after the giving of the law, Christ still needed to come. The law only looked forward to His coming. And so the Christ came, offered by God and having offered Himself, to bear the sins of those who would come to Him.

And just as there must be judgment after death, so Christ's death is reckoned to us for our judgment. This is why Paul says in Romans 6 that we have "died with Christ." Christ's death was for the sin of man. For those who come to Christ, they die with Him, and their judgment is rendered at that time. That is why, whether alive or asleep (meaning having died) in Christ, we have received our judgment. And that is why the author can then say, "To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

In Christ, the judgment for condemnation is done. There is no expectancy of being condemned, but rather He will appear the second time, apart from sin (which has been judged in Him), for salvation. This is the marvel of what God has done for us in Christ. We have gone from condemnation to salvation. It is finished.

With that understanding, there is still the truth that Hebrews is directed to the Jewish people. And so there are actually a few things which must be understood. First, the second coming referred to here is not speaking of the rapture. He is dealing with the literal return of Christ to the earth. The words hold true for those in Christ, and the rapture is when it will be realized in those who await Him. However, the salvation that is specifically referred to here is the salvation of Israel. When they call out to Him, as a nation, they will be saved and cleansed. This is referred to in Zechariah 12:10-14, and then it is expressly stated in Zechariah 13:1

—

"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

The sin of Israel will be dealt with when Christ comes, the second time, apart from sin. He will come to them for salvation, and thus “all of Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26). Paul’s words are not to be taken that all (every single Jew) will be saved, but that all of Israel who is alive when Christ returns will be saved. Therefore, “those who eagerly wait for Him,” is speaking of those who have come to faith in Christ. It is those in the church now, but it is also those after the rapture. The multiple levels of what is going on in Scripture are all realized in the work of Christ.

Life application: The truths found in Christ apply to all who are in Christ, but the context of what is being spoken of must always be considered. As the book of Hebrews is directed specifically to the Jewish people, the truths revealed there, many of which apply to those in the church now, must first and foremost be considered in light of what God is doing and will continue to do in and for Israel. Context is king, and it must be maintained in order to have a proper understanding of what is going on in God’s unfolding plan of redemptive history. This verse, along with so many others in Hebrews, clearly points to eternal salvation. If in fact we are set apart from sin unto salvation by His death, then His return for us is a guarantee. Are you stressing over sins you have committed since coming to Christ? Are you scared of condemnation because of the words of a pope, priest, or pastor? Put those fears to rest once and for all. Yes, you will be judged for your waywardness, but not for condemnation, only for loss of rewards. Christ’s death has secured your eternal destiny. All we need to do is accept His work and trust that it is sufficient!

Lord God, help us to keep our evaluation of Your word in its intended context. When we get away from that, we will certainly err in our theology. And so, give us the wisdom to understand what You are saying, to whom You are saying it, and to not pull verses out of those parameters. From there, we will certainly be doing what is right according to Your wonderful, perfect word. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. Hebrews 10:1

Chapter 10 continues with the idea of the sacrifices found under the Mosaic Law which have been contrasted to the more perfect sacrifice of Christ in fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and which then introduced the New. The author will now explain the deficiency which is found in the law (meaning the Mosaic Law) beginning with, “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come.”

Here we have two ideas which have already been stated separately, and which are now brought into one verse. The first is the “shadow” of the law in distinction to the reality found in the New Covenant. That was stated in verse 8:5, where the author said, “who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things.” The second speaks of “the good things to come.” That was seen in verse 9:11, which said, “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come.”

This “shadow of the good things to come” is then explained as being “not the very image of the things.” What Moses was told to construct, and what was then used by the people for their religious rites, was a shadowy reflection of that which is found in the coming Messiah. The Greek word, translated as “image” here, gives the sense of a representation, just as a statue represents the person who is being emulated. What was found in the sanctuary of Israel was only a shadow of such an image; nothing more than a vague representation of the reality found in Christ. Because of this, the author continues by saying that it “can never with these same sacrifices.”

Here it speaks of the sacrifices referred to in verses 9:12, 13, meaning the blood of calves and bulls and goats, as well as the ashes of a heifer. These, along with any other sacrifices mandated under the law, were offered to God, but they were only shadows given in anticipation of the time Jesus would come and fulfill what they

only anticipated. Because of this, they were repeatedly made. As the author continues to say about them, the people would continually offer them, year by year.

What he is doing is demonstrating that because of their being continually offered, they actually accomplished nothing. If they did accomplish something, the people would be cleansed, purified, and perfected, but they weren't. This is evident in his final words of the verse. He says that they can never "make those who approach perfect." How he comes to this conclusion is obvious, but it won't be revealed until the next two verses are given. For now, he simply takes it as an axiom that the sacrifices were wholly ineffectual in doing anything other than typifying Christ Jesus and His more perfect sacrifice.

If this is true, and it is, then this means that the entire system of the Mosaic law is also ineffectual in bringing people to a state of true holiness. If the sacrifices which were mandated for violation of the law couldn't purify the people, and all people under the law were required to observe them, then –

- 1) They could not have been perfect before their observance. If they were, they would not have been required to observe them for their atonement.
- 2) As they did not perfect them after they were made, then they were ineffectual in doing what they were given to do. Thus,
- 3) In order for those under the law to be perfected, the institution of a New Covenant with a more perfect Sacrifice must be necessary. And therefore,
- 4) If a such a New Covenant is introduced, the Old Covenant, by default, must become obsolete for those who are brought into the New Covenant.

Life application: The author is, once again, demonstrating the utter folly of going back to observance of the Mosaic Law in any way, shape, or form. It was an ineffective system which could never perfect anyone. As perfection of the individual can (and does) come through Christ, then who in their right mind would come to Christ and then return to those things which were made obsolete by Christ? Come to Christ, rest in Christ, and continue to rest in Christ forever. Be done with those things which can never bring us closer to God.

Yes, Lord God! We are ever so grateful for what you have done on our behalf. We are made perfect, not through repetitive sacrifices and law observance, but through Your mighty work, accomplished on our behalf through Christ Jesus. To You we cry out, "Hallelujah!" Amen.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. Hebrews 10:2

The Greek word translated as "For then" is one given to, "Assume what precedes is true, and understand what follows to be appropriate and applicable" (HELPS Word Studies). The author has just been speaking of the sacrifices which were offered "continually year by year." He noted that they could never "make those who approach perfect." The reason for this is that if they could, then would they not have ceased to be offered?" The Greek is more forceful, using a present participle. It should say, "cease being offered." The idea is the constant, unending stream of sacrifices which is being highlighted.

Despite this, the question is obvious, and it shows the inherent imperfection in the annual rite. The very fact that the Day of Atonement came about every year, and that the people needed to observe it every year, actually highlighted that it was incapable of bringing those who observed it to perfection. If those sacrifices could have made them perfect, they would, in fact, have ceased to be offered. This is in contrast to Christ. His offering was a one-time for all-time offering for sin as verse 9:28 so poignantly noted.

The author next continues after his question by pronouncing the reality of the situation –

Question: For then would they not have ceased to be offered?

Statement of fact: For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

If, in fact, the Day of Atonement rites could have made those who approach perfect, those who observed it “would have had no more consciousness of sins.” The author, using the term, “once purified,” shows that no such one-time purification took place. The idea of the word “perfect” doesn’t mean “almost perfect.” Rather, there would have been a single observance of the Day of Atonement for any given individual, and that person would then be perfected; no longer needing to go back for a sin-covering tune-up. But the high priest was high priest for life, and he had to sacrifice for his own sin each and every time he went in. If he wasn’t perfected, then neither were those on whose behalf he ministered. The very rites performed witness to their inability to resolve the situation they were supposed to resolve.

The “consciousness of sin” spoken of here does not mean “memory,” as if there is no more memory of having sinned. It rather speaks of an understanding of the need for atonement for sins committed after the sacrifice. In other words, and as an example, one could think of one’s own health –

If a person had a sickness that might lead to death, he would obviously go to a doctor to receive the cure for his ailment. If the person was cured, the question proposed by the author here would then be valid. If he went one time and was cured forever, never to get sick and possibly die again, then he would never need to go to a doctor again. He would have passed from being mortal to immortal. However, if he could get sick again, then – if and when he got sick – he would need to go again for treatment. This would demonstrate that he was not perfected by the doctor each time he went. Anytime a sickness arose, it would be a reminder of his mortal state. However, if he was cured, one-time and for all-

time, then he would no longer have a consciousness of his mortality. This doesn't mean he wouldn't remember that he was once mortal, but he would no longer have a consciousness of bearing that mortal state.

This is what the author is saying about our fallen state. We have an infection, sin, which under the Law of Moses could not be completely cured. It only received a temporary fix, but it never perfected those who came for their hoped-for cure. Taking the verses (Hebrews 10:1, 2) and simply changing the appropriate words to physical health reveals the spiritual state of Israel under the law –

“For the hospital, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same medicines, which they administer continually (any time that a person got sick), make those who approach immortal. For then would they not have ceased to be administered? For the mortals, once cured completely, would have had no more consciousness of their mortal state.”

Think of it! If the wages of sin is death, and Jesus is the cure for that state, then when one comes to Jesus, he goes from sin, leading to death, to no sin, having obtained immortality. The cure is Christ.

Life application: As with every newly introduced thought in the book of Hebrews, the author assures, and reassures, the reader of the concept of freedom from guilt. He also assures the reader of eternal salvation. In Christ, all things are made new. Jesus asks you to leave all of your feelings of guilt at His cross, and then to accept that you are saved. Jesus Christ did not die to grant eternal insecurity, but rather eternal life. If someone tells you that you can lose your salvation, gently remind them that they have no idea what they are talking about. Then tell them to go get sound theology, and to stop harming the faith of those who have been, once and forever, purified by the precious blood of Christ. Who would dare call the sufficiency of His atonement into question? Make the effort today to trust Christ, and to trust that He has eternally cleansed you from your offenses.

O God we thank you for the complete and eternal cleansing power of the cross. Glory, honor, and majesty belong to You for the mighty deliverance You brought about on our behalf. Truly no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him! But now in Christ, we have seen that marvel. Amen.

But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. Hebrews 10:3

Verse 10:1 spoke of the “same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year,” and how they were insufficient to perfect the worshipers who made them. Instead, they did exactly the opposite of what the people thought they were doing. They judged themselves free of sin and guilt because of them, but in the sacrifices there was actually a reminder to them that they were sin-filled. As the author says, “in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.” The very fact that these sacrifices continued to be made each year, it demonstrated to the people that they had an ongoing need to have their sins atoned for.

This is exactly what happens in churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples all around the world every day. It is also the same thing that happens in the hearts of the people who deny an all-wise Creator. When they do acts of charity for others – for whatever reason – they are attempting to justify themselves in the presence of God (whether they acknowledge Him as such or not). A good example of incorrect justification is Canon 10 of the Council of Trent, to which Roman Catholicism adheres –

“If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

The claim here is that man is not justified by the work of Jesus Christ alone. Instead, the claim is made that there is more than faith that is “required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification.” It goes on to say that anyone who claims they are justified in this manner (by faith in Christ alone) is anathema. In fact, making this statement is, by default, calling

- 1) Jesus anathema;
- 2) Paul anathema;
- 3) the Bible insufficient as a source for understanding holiness, and thus not God’s infallible revelation to man. Our sacrifices – whether in the temple of old or in our charitable deeds of today – can never justify us, nor add to our justification. Instead, we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

Life application: The words of the Roman Catholic church, which state that more than faith is required for “the obtaining of the grace of Justification,” are a logical contradiction. One cannot merit grace. By its very definition, grace is unmerited favor. When listening to, or reading the works of, scholars and theologians, don’t assume that because they have a certain degree, a special title, or speak for a certain church or denomination that this means they are speaking out biblical truth. One of the greatest errors of all is to believe someone simply because they speak in an authoritative way, or because they fill an authoritative position. Proper doctrine comes from Scripture, and from it alone. Commentaries are often a great help in understanding what is being said, but they must be presented in accord with Scripture.

Lord Jesus, let us not miss the mark. We are truly, surely, and completely justified by faith in You and Your work alone. Let us not be so prideful or haughty as to ever claim we could add to what You have done in order to stand right in the presence of God. All glory – every last bit of it – belongs to You alone. Amen.

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

Hebrews 10:4

This verse finishes summing up the need for Christ and His perfect work described in chapter 9. The statement is simple, but it carries huge significance for the ancient worshipers, and also for those around the world today – animal sacrifices are insufficient to take away sin. But this is exactly what was mandated in the Old Covenant sacrificial system, of which the Day of Atonement rituals were an integral and mandatory part. As the author says, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

The “blood of goats and bulls” was explicitly referred to in verse 9:13, and these sacrifices are that which was discussed in detail, both before and after that verse. Were these sacrifices effectual in accomplishing what they were given to do? The answer is an explicit, “No!” One might then question why they were done at all. The answer is that they were anticipatory in nature. God accepted them in anticipation of their fulfillment in Christ. Other than that, they were ineffectual and they had no ability to take away sin.

Why is this so important to understand? It is because such sacrifices went on continually even before the time of the law. They went from the time of Adam, through the time of Noah, Job, and Abraham. And then they continued under the Law of Moses right up to the time of Christ Jesus. And yes, they continue on today in parts of the world.

In various cultures or religions – Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Pagan, etc. – there are sects of individuals who perform blood sacrifices in an attempt to appease God or cleanse themselves of sin. But the Bible is perfectly clear – animal sacrifices can never take away the feelings of guilt because they cannot remove sin. They can only remind people of their sin and guilt.

The very rituals which are conducted in an attempt to cleanse nagging feelings of wrongdoing only make things worse. We know this intuitively because many cultures of the past went so far as to perform human sacrifices instead of animal sacrifices. Such rituals are recorded in the Bible and in the history of many societies.

Modern cultures have forbidden this, but the fact that they were conducted shows an understanding that animals were insufficient to purge sin. However, even these human sacrifices couldn't cleanse. Why? Because the humans that were sacrificed were stained with their own sin. It is impossible to transfer sin-guilt to an already sin-tarnished person.

Even infant sacrifices (such as mentioned in Jeremiah 32:35) were insufficient. King David records in Psalm 51:5 that we are sinful from birth, even from conception. There is no sacrifice apart from Christ Jesus that can take away sin. But the cross of Christ can cleanse from all sin. Only the sinless God/Man could truly atone for the sins of the world. Thanks be to God for Christ Jesus!

Life application: A temple is going to be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and the blood sacrifices of the Old Covenant are going to be reinstated. This is what the Bible says is coming. However exciting it is to see this prophecy coming true, Christians should not rejoice for the Jews that it is coming. Instead, they should mourn. They have already rejected what these animal sacrifices only pointed to, the Messiah Jesus. Christians should continue to get the word out to Israel that they have missed the mark, and that what they are doing, though prophesied in advance, is only a mournful last step on their way to finally calling on Christ.

Heavenly Father, though it is exciting to see prophecy being fulfilled in Israel concerning a coming temple and the sacrifices which will be conducted there, it is also mournful. They have missed what these things were intended to point to; they have missed the final and true Sacrifice of Christ. Lord God, open their eyes to the Messiah who has come and who has provided the full, final, and forever cleansing from sin. Open their eyes to Christ Jesus. Amen.

**Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:
“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me. Hebrews 10:5**

The word, “Therefore,” is given to introduce an evaluation of what Christ’s coming means based on what has been presented. The author has said that the law was a mere shadow of what was coming in Christ, and that the sacrifices of the law could never make those who approach perfect (10:1). He then asked a rhetorical question based on that. If those sacrifices could have perfected those who approached, wouldn’t they have ceased being offered? (10:2). He then noted that in the sacrifices themselves, there was actually a yearly reminder of sin (10:3). And then he explicitly stated that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins (10:4).

With these things stated, he shows that all of these points demonstrated the necessity of Christ to come, and that the Old Covenant was only given as a stepping stone on the way to the giving of the New Covenant. This will be revealed over the next few verses. For now, he goes directly to the coming of Christ by saying, “when He came into the world, He said.” This takes us back to Chapter 9 where it said that “Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands” (9:24).

He was the subject of that verse, and everything said after that, until the end of the chapter. The author now returns to the coming of Christ by quoting what is said of Him in Scripture. In other words, Christ, as anticipated in the Old Testament, is the fulfillment of the prophetic word of God. The author cites Psalm 40:6-8, a psalm written by David, and he attributes the words there to Christ. It is as if He was speaking out those words, even before His incarnation.

As this is so, then Christ is, in fact, the fulfillment of what is stated in that prophetic word. This is certain because there is no other record in the New Testament where Christ actually said this. The author takes it as an axiom that what is stated there in the Psalm is referring to Christ Jesus. Further, it cannot be

said that this was David merely referring to himself. This will be seen as the citation of the verses continue. For now, and with this understanding, he then begins the citation with, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire."

The words here are quoted in relation to Christ, and thus "You" is God. In other words, "Sacrifice and offering You (God) did not desire." This begins to explain the purpose of the "Therefore." The author showed (as noted above) that the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant was incapable of removing sin in man. But removing sin in man is the only way for man to be restored to God. As this is so, then it cannot be that God desired sacrifice and offering, meaning of those things mandated under the Old Covenant. And yet, He mandated them in the covenant. This again shows us that those things were only given as types and shadows of what God Himself would do in Christ Jesus. Understanding this, the author continues the citation of the psalm with, "But a body You have prepared for Me."

The author of Hebrews uses the Greek translation of the psalm, but the Hebrew reads, "My ears you have opened." Though that is a remarkable change from the Hebrew to the Greek, the difference is explained in the fact that hearing the command leads to obedience. In obedience, the person then submits his body to the will of God. Having ears implies having a body to which the ears are attached. In preparing a body, ears are likewise prepared. Hence, "a body You have prepared for Me," is not a large difference from the original, and it carries the sense of the Hebrew.

It is the incarnate body of Christ Jesus which is spoken of here. Again, think of it! The author of the psalms is writing, under the covenant in which he existed, that God did not desire the very sacrifices and offerings that he participated in year after year. If this psalm were not understood to be a prophecy of Christ, the psalmist (David) would have been taken out and stoned for blasphemy! But David (meaning God speaking through him) completely dismisses the effectual nature of the Old Covenant sacrificial system, and he cites words that could only be speaking of a human – "But a body You have prepared for Me."

The psalmist is showing, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that a HUMAN BEING would replace the Old Covenant system of sacrifices and offerings. If Israel today just stopped and considered this, as the author did two thousand years ago, then they would never reintroduce the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. They would say, "According to our own Scriptures, these have no merit."

Life application: The statement, "He came into the world," is one of the most profound statements that we could ever contemplate. God united with human flesh. No other event in the stream of time will ever compare to what happened at that moment. As the world turns, as the earth moves through the hugely vast solar system, and that in turn moves through an even more vast galaxy – in the midst of billions of galaxies – and all of them moving through the continuum of time and space, no other thing which has ever occurred compares to the coming Christ. Christ Jesus came – perfectly pure and holy – to redeem man. And man is the one part of creation that is said to bear God's image. But despite this, man can also deny the very Creator whose image he bears. Imagine the immensity of that thought. And yet, even more, it is not just a few of us, but every one of us since creation, who has denied or shunned Him at one time or another. We have all put our desires above the obligation to glorify Him. Instead of releasing His sustaining hand and returning us to nothing, God sent Christ into the world to reconcile us to the Father, showing us His immense love for us in the process. But it also reveals the truth that no sacrifice, no offering, and no payment from us is acceptable to God apart from Jesus. Instead, a body was prepared, a Man came, and a life was given. Don't be so utterly foolish as to accept less than God's offer of Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, if it were up to us... if it were up to us, we would lose our salvation ten seconds after we received it by faith in Christ. But how wonderful it is to know that it's not up to us at all! Your power to save is far greater than our inadequacy to obey. All glory, honor, majesty, and praise belongs to You alone! Amen.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin

You had no pleasure. Hebrews 10:6

Burnt offerings (actually, the word *holokautóma* signifies not just a burnt offering, but a whole burnt offering) and sin offerings were prescribed by the law. In fact, detailed meticulous instructions were given in the law in order to properly conduct the entire rite, from selection of the animal though to its final disposal. And yet this verse says they weren't pleasing to God. There are two reasons for this. First, they only anticipated Christ's sacrifice. They were found pleasing only in the sense that they looked forward to Him, but of themselves, they brought no pleasure to the Lord.

And secondly, fault rested with the people because of how they presented them. This is seen, for example, in the words of the prophet Micah –

“With what shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before the High God?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?
⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression,
The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?” Micah 6:6, 7

There, the prophet asks the people a set of rhetorical questions. The questions included those things prescribed in the law to be given as offerings – in massive quantities. Then he adds in his firstborn as a potential offering. This doesn't necessarily mean human sacrifice. He might be speaking of the dedication of a child to the Lord, like Samuel's mother did – giving him to the service of the Lord all the days of his life. But all of these offerings, even a firstborn, were insufficient. Micah then answers –

“He has shown you, O man, what *is* good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

And so Jesus came, showing us how to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. The giving of these sacrifices, without an accompanying heart for the Lord and a proper understanding of what the sacrifices signified, defeated the purpose of giving them. One does not simply buy off God with such an offering, but he is to demonstrate true remorse for sin and a desire to act properly before Him in the future.

Life application: The Bible gives outward commands to be followed in the Law of Moses, but it expected the people to have an inward change which accompanied the outward rites, rituals, and commands. However, the law was such a burdensome yoke, that the people were weighed down with meeting its strict demands, and they failed to take to heart the lessons it was intended to show them. Only in the coming of Christ do the things of the law finally make sense. And at the same time, they only make sense in relation to His fulfillment of them. Who on earth would want to go back under the mandates of the law, which Christ fulfilled and set aside through His more perfect work and sacrifice? Think! And then rest in Christ alone for your justification before God.

Lord God, surely You are worthy of our full devotion. Help us to follow in Jesus' steps and to not stray from acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly in Your glorious presence all the days of our lives. Keep us from being haughty or proud as we pursue You! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’” Hebrews 10:7**

The quote from Psalm 40 continues in this verse. It cites verses 7 & 8, but it isn’t a direct quote. Rather, it is a combination of two separate parts of these verses. The words reflect the Greek translation of the Old Testament. First, it says, “Then I said, ‘Behold I have come.’”

Verse 5 spoke of God not desiring sacrifice and offering, but instead, He prepared a body for someone. In verse 6, it repeated the thought that God had no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. Now, to show what is pleasing to God instead of those sacrifices and offerings, the declaration is made, “Behold, I have come.”

It would make no sense for David to claim that he has come in place of sacrifices and offerings. He lived under the Law of Moses, and he was required, like all others under that law, to be obedient to it – presenting the necessary sacrifices and offerings according to the law. Therefore, because this is obviously not David speaking about himself, it must then be a prophecy of the coming Messiah. To say otherwise would be to damage the intent of the words, tearing them from their intended meaning. This is surely so because the quote continues with, “In the volume of the book, it is written of Me.”

Here, the Greek word translated as, “volume of the book,” is *kephalis*. It is a noun used only here in the Bible, and it indicates “a small head,” and thus a knob. By implication, it is the end of the stick on which a manuscript is rolled. That corresponds directly to the Hebrew word of Psalm 40:7, *megillah*, meaning “a scroll.” That comes from the word *galal*, meaning, “to roll.” Thus, this is speaking of a rolled up scroll that David says is already written, and which refers to Someone in a prophetic sense. As noted, David is not claiming that a prophecy of his own coming was made in a scroll. Rather, he is writing the prophecy, under inspiration of the Spirit, to indicate that a scroll exists which speaks of someone

who has come. The words David writes are as if it is accomplished, even though it is a future prophecy.

But what “volume of the book” is David referring to? The answer must be the books of Moses, meaning the Torah, or Pentateuch. It is the law which prescribed the sacrifices and offerings; and it is also the Law which prophesied of the coming Messiah, in numerous ways, and both explicitly and implicitly. The accomplished nature of David’s words concerning the coming Messiah in the psalm correspond to the guaranteed nature of the promise of Messiah to come in the books of Moses. When God speaks, the matter is already done in His mind. The prophetic word is simply waiting for time to catch up with it. With this understanding, the final part of the quote is given with the words, “To do Your will, O God.”

The “will” of God is speaking of something which stands in contrast to the “sacrifices and offerings” of the previous verses. Again, this cannot be speaking of David. To force him into what is being said completely destroys any valid meaning which could be drawn from his words. Therefore, and without any possible doubt at all, this is a prophecy of the Messiah to come.

Verse 5 – “He came into the world,” meaning Christ.

Verse 6 – “In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.”

Verse 7 – “Behold, I have come.”

The author is saying that this verse is speaking of Jesus Christ and His greater work. For a moment, however, let it be assumed that someone hasn’t made the connection to Christ Jesus. It still does not negate the fact that the psalm points to a HUMAN BEING who would come and replace the sacrificial system found in the law. This is the necessary understanding of the words. The author will continue to explain this through verse 10, but it logically follows that this HUMAN BEING must die in order to

1) fulfill the Law of Moses, and then to also

2) initiate a New Covenant through His shed blood (Jeremiah 31:31).

The incredible part of what is stated here is that the Jews, who supposedly hold to the law and the prophets, fail to see this. David saw it in the law, and he prophesied of it in the psalms. Whether he actually understood what he was writing or not, the words are recorded in the inspired Scriptures, and thus they must be true, or this is not the word of God. And so why have they rejected what is claimed to have occurred in Christ Jesus? And more, why are they, once again, preparing to return to the sacrificial system in Israel based on the Law of Moses? And even more tragically, why do people, who supposedly believe that Jesus Christ is truly the Messiah, support rebuilding of the temple, or participate in various aspects of the Law of Moses, claiming that they are binding on Christians today? The answer lies in a lack of knowledge.

The whole counsel of the word of God is not taken into consideration, and teachers who are not properly competent to teach, or who purposely desire to place others back under the bondage of the law, do so anyway.

Life application: Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. As this is true –

- 1) No follower of Christ is bound to any precept of the Law of Moses. They are under the New Covenant.
- 2) Israel rejected their Messiah, who was clearly presented to them in their own writings (John 5:39), and thus their rejection of Him was a self-inflicted wound.

- 3) The efforts of Israel to reestablish the sacrificial system, though prophesied in the book of Daniel, is not a thing to be celebrated, but mourned over. It is a continuing rejection of Christ Jesus, and it will lead them into the tribulation period where two-thirds of Israel will be exterminated (Zechariah 13:8).

- 4) Pray for Israel now, that many will come to a saving knowledge of Christ before the terrible time of their judgment comes.

Lord God, Your word clearly and definitively states that a Person would come to offer Himself in fulfillment of the sacrificial system of Israel, and that in the shedding of His blood, a New Covenant would be introduced. It is not a hidden thing which occurred, but it was prophesied in advance, and then when it came about, it was meticulously documented for any who wish to verify the truth of His coming. Thank You that we don't have a dubious, unverifiable faith in Christ Jesus, but a sure hope because of the word which foretold of Him, and which confirms that He came! Thank You for our sure and grounded hope in eternal glory because of the work of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*" (which are offered according to the law), Hebrews 10:8

The words, "Previously saying," are referring to what was quoted from the psalm. The author is introducing select portions of the quote in order to analyze what is said more fully and to form a logical thought to consider. From there, he cites the quote with, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*." He has taken words from verses 5 & 6 of this chapter, and combined them to make his point understandable. There are three things which are highlighted –

- 1) sacrifice and offering,

- 2) burnt offerings, and
- 3) *offerings* for sin.

These were all mandated in the Law of Moses, and yet the author, through the words of David in the psalm, shows that the Lord

- 1) did not desire them, nor
- 2) have pleasure in them.

And yet, as he notes in a parenthetical thought, “which are offered according to the law.”

The repetition in this manner is usually done to solidify what has been said or to set up a contrast. In the case now presented, it is for both purposes. First, the author is ensuring that the reader understands that the sacrifices and offerings mandated under the law could not produce felicity between God and man, even though the law required them. The repetition is also used to bring about the contrast between what was then and what is now in Christ. This will be looked at more in the coming verses. The fact that these were mandated and carried out for about fifteen hundred years doesn't mean Israel was merely “spinning her wheels.” Instead, as Paul says in Galatians 3 –

“Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”
Galatians 3:21-25

These sacrifices, which were based on the law, were meant to teach that the law could only point us to our need for Christ. The mandates of the law were actually unobtainable by us because of sin, and thus He needed to fulfill them in our place. Additionally, the sacrifices were ineffective (verse 10:4), and thus He needed to die to provide atonement for us. In other words – He shoots; He scores. All points to Jesus!

Life application: The subject of most life applications in this study of Hebrews has been devoted to the admonition to not return to the law, but to remain in the New Covenant grace given by Christ. This is because it is exactly what the author of Hebrews (and thus the Holy Spirit who inspired the author) intends for us to understand. The Law of Moses served its purpose, and then it was set aside because of the work of Christ. To return to the law is to reject the work of Christ and essentially say, “I can do better than He did.” What a slap in the face of God. He is being meticulous in teaching us to not do this vile thing. Come to Christ, trust in Christ, and rest in Christ. Put away the deeds of the law, and be pleasing to God by having faith in Christ.

Thank you, O God! When we were ever-missing the target, whether through failing to meet the demands of the law, or providing an insufficient sacrifice for having failed to meet that law, You came in and saved the day. The goal is now obtainable – faith in Jesus and His work. Now we too can shoot and score ... the goal is Jesus! Amen.

...then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. Hebrews 10:9

Hebrews 10:9 is another key verse to remember when confronting Judaizers, those of the Hebrew Roots movement, or any others who cling to the Law of Moses. Two others to remember are –

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19

&

“In that He says, ‘A new *covenant*,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Hebrews 8:13

Now, in Hebrew 10:9, the author once again, and in another way, says the same basic thing. He starts with a continuation of his quote of the psalm given in verses 5-7 of this chapter. The words, “then He said,” show that this is so. In the previous verse, he cited parts of verses 5 & 6. Now, he will cite select words from verse 7.

Before looking at that, and in order to follow the line of thought properly, what was cited by the author in verse 10:8 should be remembered –

“‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*’ (which are offered according to the law).”

The Old Testament sacrifices weren’t pleasing to God, despite the fact that they were mandated by the law. They were ineffectual in restoring a right-relationship between God and man. This precipitated the need for something greater. A call was made and a voice responded, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” As it says in Isaiah 59:16 –

“He saw that *there was* no man,
And wondered that *there was* no intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained Him.”

God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, provided the salvation which the law couldn’t. In providing this work, the Old Covenant law was set aside. As the author

explicitly says, “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” The “first” is the Mosaic Law; the “second” is the New Covenant in Christ’s blood. The first was “taken away,” meaning it is annulled and obsolete (as stated in Hebrews 7:18 & 8:13).

It is to be remembered concerning what it says in Hebrews 7:12 –

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

And again in Hebrews 8:4 –

“For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;”

As can be seen,

- 1) there were “gifts” or sacrifices already prescribed by the law. These were superseded by the ultimate Gift of Jesus.
- 2) There was a change in priesthood, from Aaron to Jesus. Therefore,
- 3) there was a change in the law; the first was taken away in order to establish the second.

Life application: What part of annulled, obsolete, and taken away do you not understand?

Lord, help us to never fall back on that which couldn't satisfy. Keep us from getting trapped in the legalism of the law such as dietary, tithing, or other restrictions. Instead, may we fix our eyes on Jesus – our Foundation, High Priest, Savior, and the One from whom all blessings truly flow! Amen.

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. Hebrews 10:10

The words, “by that will,” are speaking of the will of God as cited from the psalm. Those words said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” It was God’s will that sent Christ Jesus into the world. Christ then accomplished what God willed Him to do. This “will” then begins to be explained with the words, “we have been sanctified.” It was God’s will that man would be sanctified through the coming of Christ, without which we would remain unholy and forever lost.

The verb translated as “have been sanctified” is in the perfect tense. Thus, this is not speaking of progressive sanctification, as if it were an ongoing process. Rather, it is the full and complete sanctification necessary for man to stand holy once again before God. This corresponds to Paul’s words of Romans 15:16, which speaks of the sanctification of the Gentiles –

“...that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

The sanctification is complete, and it is fully sufficient for man – both Jew and Gentile – to be acceptable to God. Of this, Vincent’s Word Studies states, “...as having become partakers of the spirit of Christ. This is the work of the eternal spirit, whose will is the very will of God. It draws men into its own sphere, and makes them partakers of its holiness.” With this understanding, the author then

explains how that state of sanctification comes about. It is “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.”

This refers back to verse 10:5 where the author cited the psalm saying, “But a body You have prepared for Me.” The body of Christ was given to replace the ineffectual sacrifices and offerings of the Old Covenant. Those were, as it said in verse 10:9, taken away (because the law was taken away) in order to establish the New Covenant through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. That is “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.” And it is, “once *for all*.”

The words, “once *for all*,” are to be taken together with the words, “we have been sanctified.” Christ’s offering was a one time for all time event which is set in contrast to the temporary offerings of the Levitical priesthood. They cleansed outwardly and temporarily; Christ cleanses inwardly and forever.

Life application: Jesus came to fulfill God’s will on behalf of fallen man; to perfect the imperfect and to restore that which had fallen. By doing God’s will, Jesus fulfilled the law which was then taken away through the introduction of the New Covenant. Through this covenant, all who call on the name of the Lord by faith have been made holy through His sacrifice, once and for all. Not once, but twice in this verse, the author proclaims eternal salvation for the believer –

- 1) We “have been sanctified,” and

- 2) This was accomplished “once *for all*.”

There is no need to fret over whether we need to ask Jesus more than once to save us. Nor is there any need to question whether our prayer in faith, be it recently or many years ago, has truly made us acceptable to God; it has. We also don’t need detailed knowledge of what occurred or how it happened. What is needed is to, once and for all, with the simple faith of a child, ask Jesus to forgive us and to be our Savior. Everything after that is growing in Christian maturity, but

never let anyone deceive you that you need to do more. Jesus' blood is sufficient to save even you and He is powerful enough to never let you go. As He said,

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” John 6:37

Heavenly Father, Your word says that through the offering of Christ we have been sanctified. It also says that this is once for all, assuring us that when we are saved, we are saved forever. Please open the eyes of those who feel Your salvation is a temporary gift which then is up to us to hold onto. If that is true, then it was never of grace. Open their eyes to this false teaching so that they can find true rest in Your salvation, once and forever. Amen.

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. Hebrews 10:11

We now have a thought repeated from verse 4 of this chapter, and yet it is given as a contrast to verse 10. In verse 4, it said that it is “not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” In verse 10 (the previous verse), it says that by God's will “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.”

The contrast is seen in the first clause of this verse. In Christ, there was a one-time offering of His body for the sins of His people. However, in the Levitical priesthood, “every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices.”

- 1) The words, “every priest,” are a sharp contrast to the one true High Priest, Jesus Christ.”

- 2) The word, “stands,” is given as a contrast to what Christ did after He completed His work. He “sat down” (Hebrews 1:3) after purging the sins of the people.
- 3) The many sacrifices were offered (daily and repeatedly) to cover sin, but as soon as another sin occurred, another offering was necessary. The sacrifice could never purify the believer because those sacrifices could “never take away sins” (repeated from verse 10:4). This is contrasted to the one-time offering of Christ.

The reason for the contrast and the repetition is because the author is slowly and meticulously building his case for the supremacy of the work of Jesus. He will again make a contrast in the coming verse which will solidify this intent. The supremacy of what Christ did will be on full display. Before getting there though, the huge multitude of sacrifices that were made over the years from Moses to Jesus should be considered.

There were thousands upon thousands of them. Each fulfilled a particular purpose, and each was a reminder to the people that they were imperfect. The sacrifice, though intending to atone for sin, actually highlighted their need for continued atonement. How much greater then is Jesus, who truly died for the sins of the world – one Sacrifice for all time.

Life application: You might possibly be struggling with the idea of asking Jesus to save you more than once. In fact, you may have asked Him to save you many times because you fear that you didn't do it right or that He somehow didn't hear you. These thoughts are based on fear. But as John says –

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18

Have no fear – if Christ died once for our atonement, then you need only ask Him to save you once. Be perfected in His love which was demonstrated on the cross and you are then assured of eternal salvation. Surely His sacrifice is sufficient. Let's pray about this.

Heavenly Father, give me a spirit of peace and assurance that my salvation is secure in the work of Jesus. Let me not be fearful that I could ever lose what You have so graciously provided for me through His cross. Today and forevermore, I will stand on the promises of Your word – I am saved, saved, saved! I am saved through the blood of Christ! Amen.

But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, Hebrews 10:12

This verse repeats thoughts seen already in several verses, including 1:3, 7:27, 8:1, and 9:26 (and others possibly as well) –

“...who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (1:3)

“...who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” (7:27)

“Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” (8:1)

“He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (9:26)

The repetition is a valuable tool to call to remembrance, and thus to solidify in the mind of the reader, these important doctrinal truths. Further, the repetition supports each step of the logical case the author makes concerning the supremacy of the work of Christ, under the New Covenant, over that of the Law of Moses. With this understanding, it now says in this verse, “But this Man.” It is speaking of Christ Jesus. That thought is given in contrast to what was just stated in the previous verse which spoke of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. From there, in this contrasting thought, he says, “after He had offered one sacrifice for sins.” This is contrasted to the word “repeatedly.”

There were many sacrifices for sins under the Old Covenant; there is one Sacrifice of Christ under the New. Those in the Old were a different category than man, being animals; that under the New is in the same, being a Man. Those under the Old were offered by another, but which included sins even for himself; those under the New were offered by Himself – and in His sinless perfection – on behalf of others.

From there, the author adds in the word “forever.” It is a word, *diénekés*, found only in verses 7:3, 10:1, 10:12, and 10:14. It signifies to “bear all the way across, in an unbroken (non-stop) fashion; to *persist* all the way, to the (intended) end, i.e. ‘*unbroken, continuous . . . perpetually, forever*’ (Abbott-Smith).” (HELPS Word Studies). The meaning of the word is not in dispute, but the placement of it is. The Greek can read one of two ways –

- 1) But this man offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God, Douay-Rheims Bible
- 2) But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, NKJV

Despite the possibility of being tied to either “sacrifice,” or “sat down,” in the Greek, the context clearly provides the correct meaning. It is connected to “sacrifice.” The repeated sacrifices which could never take away sin (10:4) are contrasted to the one Sacrifice that is sufficient “forever.” Further, if “forever” was tied to “sat down,” then there would be a contradiction in the Bible. The intended meaning of “sat down” is to convey the thought of accomplished work which is not to be repeated, but there are results of that work for which Christ rises from His position of sitting. One is found in Acts 7 –

“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ⁵⁶ and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” Acts 7:55, 56

The work of Christ on behalf of His people means that they shall be welcomed into God’s presence because of it. As what can only be considered as the greatest of honor, Christ stood to receive His first recorded martyr, Stephen. Though His work is completed, He uses His position at the right hand of God to rise in acknowledgment of the results of that work at His will. It is a demonstration of the absolute greatness of the King of kings that He would do such for those He first died for.

Only after His one-time and for all-time Sacrifice, does the author say that Christ “sat down at the right hand of God.” It is there that He rules with all power and authority in heaven and on earth at His command.

Life application: If you struggle with the doctrine of eternal salvation, consider this verse and be at peace. Jesus went to the cross, paid the price for your sin debt, and then He sat down. What He did is:

- 1) Complete
- 2) Never to be repeated, and
- 3) Eternal in significance

And Jesus didn't just sit down on a lounge chair at the beach. Instead, He sat down "at the right hand of God." All power, all authority, and all control belongs to Jesus. How could the Lord of all creation save you and then allow you to be lost again? It is impossible! If you have called on Jesus, you are free from all condemnation. Now go forth and live in His grace, grateful for His forever finished work.

Lord Jesus, never allow us to falter in the confident knowledge that you have eternally saved us from our sins. Help us to never fall back into sin, but if we do, strengthen us and return us to the right path. Keep our hearts, our minds, and our lives on that path which is directed to You. Glory, honor, and majesty belong to You alone! Amen.

...from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. Hebrews 10:13

Here we have a term, footstool, which is drawn from Psalm 110 –

The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." Psalm 110:1

This was then used by the author in Chapter 1 –

But to which of the angels has He ever said:
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Hebrews 1:13

However, the thought is also essentially repeated in 1 Corinthians 15, a passage which is necessary to understand what is on the author's mind –

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. ²⁷ For ‘He has put all things under His feet.’ But when He says ‘all things are put under *Him*,’ *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

The idea presented now in Hebrews is that the words, “from that time,” are speaking of the words of the previous verse which spoke of Christ's one-time sacrifice for sins which was then followed by His sitting down at the right hand of God. He is at the position of all power and authority, and yet He has not yet subdued all of His enemies. Thus, from the time He sat down, He is “waiting.” Christ is not repeating His sacrifice. Instead, that is complete, and its effects are ongoing for any and all who will but receive Him. Further, they are on-going for Israel collectively to also receive Him. After those numbers are filled, there is still one more aspect of His waiting, which is that He will continue to wait until “His enemies are made His footstool.”

The enemies referred to are found first in Revelation 19, and include the beast and the false prophet. They will be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. Those joined with them will be “killed with the sword.” This will then usher in the millennial reign of Christ. But this is not the completion of subduing His enemies. In Revelation 20, it then notes that the enemies of God will be destroyed by fire and then the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. After a final judgment on all humanity is completed, Death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire.

There is a long process ahead which will be played out in redemptive history. Until that is complete, the plan will continue. Only when “His enemies are made His footstool,” meaning being brought into complete subjugation, will the process be fully complete.

Life application: Jesus is, even now, seated at the right hand of God, meaning all authority, all power, all honor are His, and all allegiance is due Him. However, the concept of a footstool is included here to indicate the ongoing nature of bringing the world back to the original state in which it was created – with complete obedience to God and fellowship with Him. When we sit, our work is done, but when we use a footstool, total peace has been achieved. The world we see now isn't in total peace. It continues to strive against the risen Christ. However, one day He will return and destroy all wickedness. As Matthew Henry said, “Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool; some by conversion, others by confusion; and, which way soever it be, Christ will be honoured.”

Heavenly Father, because of Christ we look forward with anticipation to that glorious day when there will be no more strife, no more anxiety, no more loss or pain or death. Instead, we will live in Your presence forevermore – perfectly content in all Your glory! May that day be soon! Thank You for the sure promises we have because of Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Hebrews 10:14

This verse is similar to verse 10:10. Placed side by side, the similarity and the contrast can be seen –

10 – By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

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

Verse 10 referred to Christ's coming to do God's will. In that, He offered Himself, and it is through that will of God that we individually have been sanctified. Now verse 14 refers to the offering of Christ which has perfected each person, forever, of all of those people who are being sanctified, forever. In other words, it is not speaking of the individual who is sanctified, but all who are being sanctified through the one, final, and complete sacrifice of Christ. Of them, each is "perfected forever."

This same word was used in verse 2:11 –

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

In verses 2:11 and 10:14, the use of the word in this way is speaking of those who are in the way of sanctification, but there is no regard to time. Whereas in verse 10, it was speaking of a time in which the individual was sanctified.

The author is using very precise words to reveal what has occurred in the one-time and for all-time sacrifice of Christ. It is His offering (a one-time event) which has perfected forever (at the moment a believer comes to Him) those who are being sanctified (meaning anyone at any time from the sacrifice forward).

Life application: This verse is another evidence for eternal salvation. As it says, "...by one offering," meaning Jesus' cross, "He has perfected forever," indicating the permanence of what occurred in the believer's life. In other words, the act of what Jesus did for the believer is completely sufficient in itself to forever perfect (and thus save) those who believe. Be confident in your salvation that it was a one-time and forever act. Yes, you will lose rewards when you slip up, but from the moment you were saved, you were saved forever.

Lord God, we can see that You have left it up to us to bear fruit or to squander the salvation which came at such a high price. And so, give our hearts the burning desire to live for You today and always. Without Your nudging, we will surely let You down. So nudge away, O great Lord! Amen.

But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,
Hebrews 10:15

The author has already cited that the Holy Spirit has spoken out utterances concerning Christ, such as in verse 3:11 and in verse 9:8. In stating that the Holy Spirit has spoken, and then in citing verses from the Old Testament, the author is showing his complete conviction that he believes that Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. This is exactly what Jesus also stated, and it is repeated by Paul and by Peter.

In the case of this verse, the author again brings in this truth by saying, “But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us.” He is making the adamant statement that what he will say is from God as revealed through the third Person of the Godhead. He then says, “for after He had said before.” It is a rather perplexing phrase, which scholars have struggled to explain, but it simply needs to be kept in the context of the passage.

In verse 10:8, he said, “Previously.” This was quoting the psalm which was being applied to Christ Jesus. In verse 10:9, he said, “then He said.” This was again applying words of the psalm to Christ Jesus. Now, we have this verse, once again given by the Holy Spirit, which will cite Jeremiah 31 (which has already been cited in Chapter 8), and which is once again being applied to Christ Jesus.

What is happening is exactly what Jesus said in John 5:39 –

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”

It is a thought again expressed by Jesus in John 15:26, 27 –

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

The author is showing that the things written before by the prophets, and the things which will be written after by the apostles, are inspired of God through the Holy Spirit in order to testify to the Person of Jesus Christ. With this understanding, the author will next again cite the words of Jeremiah 31 to now more fully explain what he had previously introduced. In his citation, he will follow the train of thought in Jeremiah 31 demonstrating an “after,” meaning a conclusion, from what he said “before,” meaning within the citation itself. In other words, the author is saying –

- 1) I cited Jeremiah 31 already (before).
- 2) In that citation I said, “X.”
- 3) And then in that citation (after X), I said “Y.”

The contents of this thought will be revealed in the coming two verses.

Life application: In this verse, the author uses the truth that all Scripture was given by the Holy Spirit to point to Christ. He pens with the certain conviction that what was said in the past via the prophets, and under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, verifies his claims about the supremacy of Christ’s work. It also verifies to the

recipients (the Hebrew people) that the Old Testament itself claims that the Old Covenant would be superseded. This is a wonderful point to start with when witnessing to Jewish people.

To make claims about Christ, or the superiority of the New Testament, from the New Testament, is called “circular reasoning.” It is the same as making claims for the validity of the Bible from the Bible. Using a source to justify itself may rightly lead to rejection, unless something external confirms what is being said. In the case of the New Testament, an argument for it can be made from the Old. This is what the author has been doing and will continue to do. When you witness to others about Jesus, unless you have external information to validate what you say, they have every right to reject you. What externals are acceptable? What issues should we bring up? Some are

- 1) the nature of man, including sin, responsibility, etc; and
- 2) the composition of nature which demonstrates an intelligent Being. Further, we should also pray for
- 3) the participation of the Holy Spirit. (Do you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your witness?)

These and other external verifications of the content of the Bible keep you from using circular reasoning and looking impotent. Paul used all of these when He spoke to those in the Aeropagus in Acts 17 – and so should we. His speech led to conversions and he only brought in a biblical point (the resurrection) at the very end of his speech.

Lord, you've given us abundant evidence for the truth of the Bible. Help us to use these evidences to support what the Bible claims. How wonderful it is to read Your word and then to see how it is supported by what we see around us! Give us wisdom to use these tools effectively in bringing many to a saving knowledge of You! Amen.

“This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”
Hebrews 10:16

The author now reaches back to his words of Chapter 8 where he cited Jeremiah 31. However, he only focuses on a select portion of that quote, and he makes some variations in it while citing it. Side by side, the variations can be noticed. (NOTE: the word “minds” is in the singular. It should be translated as “mind,” not “minds,” and so it is cited correctly below) –

“For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:”

“This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord:”

&

I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts;

I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their mind I will write them,”

It can be seen that though the substance of the verses is changed a bit, the intent remains the same. It also shows us that the heart and the mind carry the same general idea, and they are being taken synonymously, but that there is both a plurality (hearts) and a unity (mind).

The entire thought consistently points to a time when Israel, as a group of individual people, will collectively have their mind converted to Christ. The author has said in verse 13 that Christ is waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. The author then said that this is an ongoing process, and it will lead to a time when Israel will call out to Him. At that time, they will be having the laws put into their hearts (ongoing – the verb is a present participle, active), but they will have them written on their mind (future – the verb is a future indicative, active) at some point.

Life application: It isn't easy to grasp all that the Bible is revealing to us because the parsing of words between languages, and the use of exacting words to convey specific meaning, takes precision. Translators often miss these subtleties, and thus the intent of the Greek is actually quite different than what the translation presents. In this one verse, the NKJV, following after the KJV, misses the action of the verb, and translates a singular as a plural. This makes it extremely difficult to see what the intent of the passage is. Don't get stuck reading a single translation and think that you are being scholarly. In fact, it is generally quite the opposite, especially with marginal translations which are chock full of translational errors.

Thank You, O God, for the gift of Your Holy Spirit. In His fellowship, we can then begin to understand “the things of God” as revealed in Your word and to be able to grasp those truths more fully as we study it. And, how precious is Your word – it is sweeter than honey to our mouths! We love You Lord God, and we cherish Your word! Amen.

...then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”
Hebrews 10:17

The author has been once again loosely citing Jeremiah 31, which he already cited in Chapter 8. This is a portion of Hebrews 8:12. Placed side by side, they read –

8:12 – “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

10:17 – *then He adds*, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

As can be seen, 10:17 adds in the italicized words, “then He adds.” These are inserted by the translators and are not a part of the original, but they are inserted because they are explaining the difficult words of verse 10:15, which said, “But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before.”

Though disputed as to the meaning of those words, the translators here are making the logical assumption that, in the citation from Jeremiah, the Holy Spirit is witnessing to the reader of Hebrews (specifically, the Hebrew people to whom the epistle is addressed). Thus, verse 10:15 which says, “for after He had said before,” is referring to verse 10:16. The inserted words of 10:17 (“then He adds”) are then continuing the thought. Laying it out in bullets should help –

1) But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,
– “This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”

2) Then He adds
– “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Thus the inserted words, “Then He adds,” are simply clarifying the otherwise difficult to understand words of verse 10:15. Understanding this, The entire thought is given to explain the supremacy of the work of Christ over the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, sacrifices and offerings only brought a reminder of sins, but they never actually took them away. However, in the offering of the body of Christ, and with the acceptance of that in

the hearts and minds of the people of Israel, then “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Life application: As a guide concerning what has been said, we can follow these thoughts to their logical conclusion (remember, the words have been speaking of Israel the people, but the words hold true for any who come to Christ) –

- 1) We have sinned. God is infinitely holy. Therefore, we stand condemned.
- 2) Deeds to gain the favor of God are insufficient because they come from what has been created. In other words, all is from Him and ultimately is His.
- 3) The Old Covenant sacrifices fell into the realm of things in creation and could never take away sin.
- 4) Jesus’ divine nature is not part of creation.
- 5) Jesus, being fully Man, gave Himself to pay our debt.
- 6) The payment, once rendered, is
 - a) available
 - b) acceptable
 - c) all-sufficient
 - d) eternal

Therefore –

God offers it; God accepts it; it is complete in scope; its effects last forever. This is why we can – with complete confidence – accept that He will never remember our “sins and lawless acts.”

Lord God, trusting in Your word is the most wonderful thing to our hearts. You have said we are forgiven by faith in Christ. Our hearts are grateful. You have said that our forgiveness means that we are saved from Your wrath. Our hearts are relieved. You have said that our salvation is eternal. Our hearts are overjoyed. Praise be to You, O God. Help us to not only trust Your word, but to keep on trusting it. We have surety of hope because of the word You have given. Hallelujah and Amen!

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

Hebrews 10:18

The verse here, though seemingly subdued, is the culmination and high point of the entire section of the letter. It is also the last part of doctrinal instruction in the book. From here, the author will provide words of exhortation and encouragement on how to conduct one’s life based on the doctrinal nature of the items he has explained. And so to close out this section, he says, “Now where there is remission of these.” The word “remission” signifies forgiveness. The Greek word means “to send away.” In the sending away of their sins, there is pardon, release, and complete forgiveness of the sins and lawless deeds of the previous verse. The author has just said that, in the eyes of the Lord, they will be remembered no more.

As the sins are pardoned, then, obviously, “*there is* no longer an offering for sin.” What is being conveyed, again, is the “greater than” nature of the New Covenant over the Old. Under the Mosaic Law, sacrifices and offerings were constantly repeated. This brought back the memory of sin, and it continued to remind the people that they were sinful. However, under the New Covenant, the sins are

forgiven – once and forever. There is no longer an offering for sin because there is no longer the imputation of sin. As Paul says –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19

Instead of a system of continuous sacrifices and unceasing guilt for sin, we have one Sacrifice and a word of reconciliation. What has been realized in the New Covenant is infinitely greater than that of the Old.

Life application: First century Jews who were considering a return to the temple and its sacrifices were being told, in certain language, that this move would be completely ineffective in improving their position with God. What would be the point? Their sins were already forgiven in Christ, and where these had been forgiven, there was no longer any sacrifice for sin; their return would be a useless gesture. The same is true with the Jews who are now coming to Christ. A temple will be rebuilt, but the exhortation is to fix the mind and eyes on Christ, not to be swept back into a useless, failed system of ineffectual sacrifices which reminded of sin. Instead, they are being implored to stay the course and to be freed from the memory of sin once and forever. So too are we now, in the dispensation of Grace, not to get caught up in observing the Law of Moses, in whole or even in part. We are to trust in Christ, rest in Christ, and be fully satisfied with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Never does the Bible ask us to blindly walk through this life. Instead, God asks us to use reason and to be fully versed in His word. Using our brains doesn't demonstrate a lack of faith. Instead, it directs our faith to the narrow path of Jesus Christ. As Proverbs 14:12 says –

“There is a way *that seems* right to a man,
But its end *is* the way of death.”

Choosing the right way is a responsibility we all bear.

Lord – a thousand religions on a zillion websites tell us they have the answer – that they are the path to You. But Lord, Your word says there is one Way and one Door. Protect us and keep us on that Way which leads to life. Help us to keep our thoughts and our eyes on Jesus – the Way, the Truth, and the Life! Amen.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,
Hebrews 10:19

With the doctrinal aspect of the epistle concluded, the author now begins his words of exhortation and encouragement. The words in this verse and the next few are very similar to those found in Hebrews 4:14-16. After having given so much theological instruction on the supremacy of the work of Christ, he once again restates his thoughts. In other words –

- 1) “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.” (4:16)
- 2) Here is how and why that is possible (intervening chapters and verses)
- 3) “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.” (10:19)

The word, “Therefore,” sums up every chief and supporting thought to be found which explains what is now stated. The statement was made, the case justifying it was presented, and now the case is restated to complete the thought as a close to the presentation.

The Hebrews (and any Gentile who has placed His faith in Christ as well) have been given the information necessary to understand why they, who once were forbidden to go beyond a certain point in the sanctuary under pain of death (Numbers 3:38, etc), were now not only allowed to enter the Holy Places (the word in Greek is in the plural, and it signifies the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place), but rather to have boldness in doing so.

The word “boldness” is one which indicates “freedom of speech,” and thus, “confidence.” There is no holding back, but that which is desired is to be freely obtained. As this is a word referring especially to “boldness in speech,” the idea that one gets is not a literal entering into the Holy Places, but a confident appeal to God who is in the Holy Places, as if we literally enter and speak to the Lord, just as Moses did – face to face (see Exodus 33:11). And, just as the priests of Israel presented the incense daily before the veil, which would then waft through the veil and into the presence of the Lord, so our prayers go through the veil (which is Christ). The symbolism shows that our prayers, because of Christ Jesus, are being transmitted directly to God through Him, and this is because it is “by the blood of Jesus.”

The term is more rightly translated as, “in the blood of Jesus.” We do not carry the blood of Christ into the Most Holy Place, but – like the symbolism of the high priest of Israel – the High Priest Jesus presented the blood, and all who come to Christ are symbolically presented with Him. This is explained, for example, in Ephesians 2 & 3 –

“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Ephesians 2:18

“...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”
Ephesians 3:12

The Body has been offered, the Sacrifice has been made, and the blood has been accepted; atonement is realized for those who – by faith – come to God through

Christ. We are covered by the blood, and thus we are “in” the blood that has been offered.

Life application: The over-arching theme of the book of Hebrews is “greater than.” Jesus is greater than the angels. Jesus is greater than Moses. Jesus is greater than Aaron, etc. An underlying theme, however, is “boldness.” The word, in one form or another, is used multiple times in the book as a reminder that believers are completely safe, completely secure, and can be completely at rest in what Jesus has done for us. And this did not come about, nor does it come about, by our efforts under the law. It came about solely by Christ’s efforts in fulfillment of the law and in the establishment of the New Covenant in His blood. It is all about JESUS!

Glorious God Almighty, when we were weak and without hope in this world, You sent Christ Jesus to do what we could never do – to obtain that which was out of reach, and to provide that which could not be granted in any other way. He has loosed the chains of bondage, and He has led us to Your glorious presence once again. All hail what You have done through Jesus Christ our Lord. All hail the Name above every name. All hail JESUS! Amen.

...by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, Hebrews 10:20

The verse is connected to the previous one. Together, they read –

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,
²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,”

The words here, “a new and living way,” are incorrect. There never was a way for us to enter. Only the priests could do so in an earthly sanctuary, and theirs was only prefiguring the true access. Now there is “a way, new and living.” There is one way and only one way to enter, and that is through Christ.

With this understanding, and with the small, but major correction, it is seen that, “by a way, new and living,” is speaking of entering the Holiest. Only the priests could enter into the holy places, and only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, only once a year on the Day of Atonement, and only with blood. But that was not into heaven. It was only a type and shadow of what Christ would do. Now, because of Christ, those who believe in Him may boldly enter covered in His blood. Which is the “way, new and living.”

Shed blood signifies death, and yet, the verse here says the way is “living.” This is because His shed blood not only fulfilled the Old Covenant, but it established the New Covenant –

“Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”

Thus, it is a way “which He consecrated for us.” It is the death of Christ Jesus which allows us full and unfettered access to God once again. The same word, translated here as “consecrated,” was translated in verse 9:18 as “dedicated.” These are its only two uses in Scripture. The word signifies, “advancing to a new sphere (dimension) of reality.” It is Christ who makes this possible for us, and it is “through the veil, that is His flesh.”

Here the symbolism of the veil which stood between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the Sanctuary is explicitly said to prefigure Christ Jesus. Understanding this, it makes this veil, or *paroket*, an amazing study. It is well worth the time to watch this video from the Superior Word, to discover what is being pictured in it in relation to the coming Christ –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJvNjczxFNc>

One can see in this the humanity and the deity of Christ. The veil, His body, is what allows access into God's presence. As the veil concealed the glory of God behind it, so Christ's humanity concealed that same glory. This is evident from the account of the Transfiguration. In the rending of the veil, meaning His body, access to the glory of God is obtained.

Life application: For a short explanation of the symbolism of the veil, we can look at two accounts of it in Scripture –

“You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. ³² You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia *wood* overlaid with gold. Their hooks *shall be* gold, upon four sockets of silver. ³³ And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy *place* and the Most Holy. ³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. ³⁵ You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.”
Exodus 26:31-33

And another time the curtain is mentioned –

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.
⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,” Matthew 27:50, 51

The curtain of the temple restricted access to the Most Holy place. Just as the curtain was torn open when Christ died, so access to the throne of God was restored to fallen man through the body of Jesus. We need look for no other

explanation. The Bible tells us the wonderful story. Trust that access has been granted, and also be sure that it is only through Christ that access is so granted.

Lord God, thank You for the restored access to Your glory which was lost so long ago when we turned away from You in Eden. Now -- through Christ – a way, living and new, has been opened up for those who will simply accept it. Christ’s body was torn so that we can come to You again. What a marvelous wonder You have accomplished for Your people. Thank You for Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

...and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, Hebrews 10:21

Here the author builds upon what he has been saying. We can boldly enter the Holy Places because of the blood of Jesus (10:19). This is in “a new and living way which He consecrated for us” (10:20). And that is “through the veil” (10:20) which is His flesh. He now adds to that with, “and *having* a High Priest.” The Greek does not read “High Priest.” Instead, it uses the word *me gas*, or “great.” Thus, He is the “Great Priest.” It is true that He is the High Priest, however, the author purposefully uses this term (also used in Hebrews 4:14 with a different connecting word).

This then is most probably referring to the prophecy of the Great Priest from Zechariah 6, and it seems that this is a purposeful connection to that verse by the author. In that passage, it says –

““Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set *it* on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹² Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying:

“Behold, the Man whose name *is* the BRANCH!

From His place He shall branch out,

And He shall build the temple of the Lord;

¹³ Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord.

He shall bear the glory,
And shall sit and rule on His throne;
So He shall be a priest on His throne,
And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”” Zechariah 6:11-13

In verse 11 of that passage, Joshua is called *ha'kohen ha'gadol* – “the priest, the great.” There is prophesied in that passage a uniting of the offices of King and High Priest. This is realized in Christ Jesus, and this seems to be what the author has on his mind. Christ is not just “a high priest,” but He is the “Great Priest.” It is He who (as Zechariah prophesies) “shall build the temple of the Lord.” In the Bible, and in both Testaments, the term “house of God,” is frequently used to speak of the temple of the Lord. It is this same term which is now used by the author to reveal the authority with which Christ rules. He is “a Great Priest over the house of God.”

A description of Jesus as the Great High Priest is described in glorious detail in Revelation 1 –

“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.” Revelation 1:12-16

The symbolism is rich in this account as it shouts out Christ’s glory – both His humanity and His divinity. The lampstands were used in the temple for illumination. That He is “like the Son of Man” indicates His humanity. The garment reaching down to His feet reflects His status as our High Priest. The golden band replaces the woven band of the earthly high priest and reveals His deity and also the eternity of the office. The snow-like head and hair indicate His absolute purity and divine glory. The eyes like a flame of fire are what read into our very thoughts and minds. The feet like fine brass represent his permanence and

authority to judge. His voice like the sound of many waters reveals his deity and authority to proclaim God's word. The seven stars in His hand speak of His sovereign authority over the angels of the churches. The sharp two-edged sword reflects the authority of His words and their ability to "judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart;" and His countenance like the sun shining in its strength is indicative of the glory of God which shone in the sanctuary as seen in the Old Testament.

Life application: The risen Christ, Jesus, is our Great Priest! Although much of the Old Testament symbolism concerning priestly matters is not used by Paul (in earlier epistles) during the Gentile-led church age, that is because the Gentiles had less need to understand those roles which the Hebrews would be fully aware of. However, even Paul's words show that Christ fulfills all of the priestly roles for us, in this dispensation, as the high priest of Israel did for the people of Israel under the Old Covenant. There is one atoning Sacrifice, there is one Mediator between God and man, etc. And those things are handled by Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection, and continued mediation. If you wonder if your prayers to God actually make it to His ears, don't worry. If you are in Christ, they do. He is, even now, tending to your needs before the Father.

Lord God, it is so wonderful to know that we do not have the need for an earthly priest to minister for us before You. Rather, we have Jesus, the Great Priest of the New Covenant who fills every role necessary to bring us to You once again, and to mediate for us in Your presence. We have absolute surety in Christ that our needs before You are met perfectly. Hallelujah and Amen.

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

Hebrews 10:22

The words, "let us draw near," are connected to the "boldness to enter the Holiest" of verse 20. The author is imploring his audience to draw near to God

(who resides in the Most Holy Place, symbolic of heaven itself). It is reminiscent of the words of Hebrews 7:19, where the author speaks of “the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Believers have that hope, and they are to have boldness in that hope. James spoke in this manner as well –

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8).

In the surety of our hope, and in displaying boldness in it, we are to “draw near with a true heart.” The author has already used the word translated as “true” twice in relation to the true tabernacle (meaning typical of Christ where God resides), and the true Holy Places (speaking of heaven). He now uses it one more time in the book in relation to the heart of the believer. The word “emphasizes the *integrity* of what is true, down to its *inner make-up* (reality, ‘true inside and out’)” HELPS Word Studies. Vincent’s Word Studies goes further by saying, “The phrase means more than in sincerity. Sincerity is included, but with it all that enters into a right attitude toward God as revealed in our Great High Priest, - gladness, freedom, enthusiasm, bold appropriation of all the privileges of sonship.”

With such a true heart, the author notes that we are to draw near “in full assurance of faith.” The words are similar to verse 6:11, which spoke of the believers, “full assurance of hope until the end.” The faith is in the truth of what is presented, and it is the very basis for any proper relationship with God. That then leads to the full assurance of hope. When one possesses the full assurance of faith, their full assurance of hope will be rightly grounded and directed. And in this, the author then speaks of “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”

Here the author speaks of the internal, spiritual aspect of man in his relation to Christ. The heart is that which relates to “the affective center of our being” (HELPS Word Studies). Though the heart is spoken of more than eight hundred times in the Bible, it never speaks of the physical organ itself, but it is used figuratively in relation to the mind, will, intention, and inner being of man. Thus, having them “sprinkled from an evil conscience,” looks to the cleansing power of the blood of

Christ as it cleanses man from his moral impurity while purifying his mind. This symbolic cleansing is referred to by David in the 51st Psalm –

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Psalm 51:7

The purging with hyssop was a purification by the sprinkling of a blood mixture. David wasn't referring to being externally cleansed, but internally. This is made clear in his words later in the psalm which say, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10). This is the purification referred to now by the author of Hebrews.

From there, the author continues with, “and our bodies washed with pure water.” This is the external aspect of the body. As the inner hearts of men are to be purified to draw near in sincerity, the external body is to be washed in symbolic agreement with that inner change. The Greek, however, reads in a specific manner –

our (plural)

hearts (plural)

our (singular)

body (singular)

There are many people; there is one body. The church is one, but Israel collectively is one as well. The Jews and Gentiles who have been brought into the church are cleansed, but the nation of Israel has not yet been so purified and cleansed. This then is referring to Israel, the people, as was prophesied in Ezekiel 36:25 –

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.”

There was a time prophesied by Ezekiel in which Israel as a collective people would be brought from among the nations and brought back into their own land. In that time, the Lord promises that He would cleanse them. That time is yet ahead, but it is surely coming. They have been brought back, and they are once again in the land being prepared for their cleansing. The pure water then is the word as referenced in Ephesians 5 –

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”
Ephesians 5:25-27

Jew and Gentile are one body in Christ, but Israel as a collective whole is not yet purified in this manner. This will occur at some point. It is this that the author is referring to here. Individual Jews are to be purified, and the body as a whole is to be cleansed.

Life application: There is one gospel, there is one church (though made up of many “churches”), and there is one way to be brought into that church. It is through the blood of Christ and the cleansing which He provides. Israel (the people) is a part of what God is doing, and He has not rejected them. The truth of this matter continues to be seen in the particular words chosen by the author of Hebrews in order to reveal this.

Yes Lord! Through You we have full assurance of properly directed faith. Through You our hearts are sprinkled, thus cleansing us from a guilty conscience. And through Your word our body is made holy – washed with pure water. Because of You, we stand acceptable to God the Father. What else can we do but shout! Hallelujah and Amen!

Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23

The author has already twice implored his readers to hold fast. In verse 3:6, he said –

“...whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

And then once again the same Greek word is used in verse 3:14 –

“For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

This is now the last time he will use it, and the last time it is used in Scripture. He urges his audience to “hold fast the confession of *our* hope.” In this then is the second of the three standard attributes which the author speaks of. In verse 10:22, the author wrote of “faith.” In this verse, he writes of “hope,” and in the next verse he will speak of “love.” The “confession of hope” is the surety of the promise of God as it applies to the life of the believer. We can have faith that God is merciful, but do we have hope that His mercy will be applied to those who believe in Christ? Such is the point of the author’s admonition.

The audience is exhorted to hold fast to that which has been promised, and they are admonished to do so “without wavering.” The word is found only here in Scripture, *aklinés*. It signifies “unbent,” and thus resolute and firm. There was to be only the mental assurance that what is promised will be delivered.

The lesson of Israel in the wilderness comes to mind. The people certainly knew that the Lord promised them entrance into Canaan, but they did not have faith that He would be with them in the process, and their hope was thus not

grounded. Instead, it wavered. In this, they turned their hearts away from the Lord and back to Egypt. And in response, the Lord sentenced them to die in the wilderness. They failed to realize that “He who promised is faithful.”

Believers have been presented with the truth that Christ has gone before His people, through the veil, and into the Holy Places. Further, He is even now ministering as High Priest before God in order to mediate on our behalf. And so, to ensure that the reader doesn't waver, he reminds them now that He is, in fact, faithful. Because He is, then why should His people do anything but hold fast to the hope they confess?

The lesson of Israel, being spared throughout the ages, and still remaining as a people now, demonstrates that God keeps His covenant even when His people falter and fail. As we have this demonstration of past (and continued) performance, and as we have the message of Christ revealed to us through the apostles, then there should be no wavering in our hope at all.

Life application: As a society progresses from honoring hard work to one which is entitlement-based, the very moral character of that society changes. Instead of being productive and tending to one's own needs, the people begin to expect things they did not personally earn. Eventually, they take what is not theirs from those who have earned it. This is the direction that much of the industrialized world has been going, and in many cases, it has already arrived.

The moral fabric of many Christian denominations has followed this change and has become a social gospel rather than one based on a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Another result of this move is that people in churches allow personal faith, and the surety of their hope, to become entitlement-based as well. Church attendance moves from focusing on the glory of God to discovering what God can do for the congregant. Pastors no longer preach on personal responsibility or Christian values, but instead preach that we should “expect a blessing” or “expect a miracle” in our lives.

People no longer come to the table in gratitude, but rather in expectation. When they arrive, they claim rather than proclaim; instead of “I proclaim the name of Jesus,” it becomes “I claim in the name of Jesus.” Ideally, holding fast to the hope we confess should include honoring the One in whom our hope rests, not demanding from Him.

If we really believe God exists and that He is sovereign, then our faith will remain strong in crisis as well as in prosperity. When we expect a reward for our faith, then our faith is misdirected – the reward was received when Jesus saved us. Everything else which comes after that must be taken in its proper context. Jesus is ever-faithful – our sins are forgiven, our resurrection is assured, and our eternity is settled. Let us remember to praise Him for His faithfulness.

Thank you, Sovereign Lord, for the perfect Gift of our Lord Jesus. Give us willing hearts to hold fast to the hope we confess in Him. Keep us from willful presumption, and rather, give us hearts that petition You in humility. Glory and honor belong to You! Amen.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,
Hebrews 10:24

The author now states a third “let us” admonition. One has followed on the heels of the other. The first two were “let us draw near with a true heart” and “let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope.” Each of these was stated directly after it was noted that we have “a High Priest over the house of God.” Now, the author admonishes his audience to also “let us consider one another.”

The word gives the sense of thinking from top to bottom, and thus to perceive clearly. The intent is that we are to consider one another’s spiritual state through a constant and careful evaluation of where that person is at any given time. Paul expresses the thought beautifully in Philippians 2:3, 4 –

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

With this attitude, the believer in Christ is to really care about the well-being of the individual “in order to stir up love and good works.” The word translated as “stir up” is *paroxusmos*. It is only seen one other time in Scripture, in Acts 15:39, where Paul and Barnabas had such a sharp dispute that they separated. It signifies “a provocation which literally jabs (cuts) someone so they ‘must’ respond” (HELPS Word Studies). Unlike the case between Paul and Barnabas, here, it is a positive provocation. It is a stirring up of love and good works in the one who is the object of attention.

Life application: Taking the three “let us” statements as a continued thought, we should consider that if Israel had confidence in drawing near to God with a true heart because they had a temple among them in Jerusalem, and if that temple gave them an ability to hold fast to the confession of their hope because they had a high priest who could minister to their spiritual needs, then how much more should we have greater confidence in the security which comes from Jesus.

Because of the believer in Christ’s more perfect hope, how much more should we consider others and strive to stir up in them love and good works! Love is easier to measure from our perspective, but unfortunately “deeds” are not. Because of this, dubious standards of “deeds” are set up by churches and individuals. If you don’t meet their criteria, then they claim you “can’t be saved” or “you’re not a good Christian.” Probably the best thing to do is not worry about the specific deeds that people expect and instead give the Lord credit for all that occurs in your life. Should you break a leg, remember to thank the Lord for the time to rest. Should you find a \$20.00 bill on the ground, give the Lord thanks for the bounty. Should you be seen helping an old lady across the road, give Jesus the credit for giving you the heart to do it.

No matter what you do, do it with the notion that the Lord is the one who gets the credit. In addition to this, not only should we be living the thankful life, but we should make every attempt to be both an example to others and to remind them to live likewise. In all you do, do it unto the Lord!

Lord God, You have blessed us so abundantly. Thank You for all that comes from Your open hand of grace. And so, give us willing hearts to live faithful Christian lives – doing deeds of righteousness in Your name and to Your glory. And Lord, help us to spur others on to the same fruitful life we have asked for ourselves. In Jesus' name we pray! Amen.

...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

The author continues his exhortations to his audience. Before looking at his words, remember that the specific audience consists of Hebrews. However, the truths found in the epistle often include truths which pass over to all believers at any given time. The work of Christ is one – for Jew and for Gentile. The church is one, whether made up of Jew or Gentile or both. Understanding this, he builds on what was just said with the words, “let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”

How will this come about unless believers are around one another? With this thought in mind, he continues with, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” The word translated as “assembling” is not the usual word for a called out assembly (*ecclesia*), but is rather one used only one other time, by Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 – *episunagógé*. It signifies “a *specific* (act) ‘grouping together’ that fulfills (builds on) the *specific purpose* of the gathering together” (HELPS Word Studies). In it can be seen the basis of the word “synagogue.”

Scholars are divided on the exact intent of the word; but rather than meaning “assembly,” as in the church body itself, it more probably means the “assembling,” signifying the gathering together of the people for the set purposes of worshiping God, and exhorting one another (as was stated explicitly in the previous verse). The reason for the specific wording, then, is to make a distinction between a synagogue where attendance was mandatory, regardless of what occurred while there, and simply gathering together for a set purpose, regardless as to the location. One could, in modern times, think of a person attending online as being a part of an assembly, even if not in the specific place. They are online in order to worship God, and they can – through the chat rooms – exhort one another at the same time.

The author then says, “as is the manner of some.” It is evident that some thought they could “go it alone,” and that being an island in their faith was acceptable. He reveals to them that this is not so. Whatever their reason for failing to gather, the author implies that their reasoning does not bear up under scrutiny. But rather, it is an excuse without any true basis when compared to the call to assemble.

He then gives a contrast. Instead of forsaking the assembly, they were directed to gather together for the purpose of “exhorting *one another*.” The words “one another” are inserted, but they are implied in the intent. The exhortation (or better, encouragement) is a two-way street. Some need to be built up at one time, others require it at other times. Those who forsake the assembly probably need it more than those who do not.

Finally, the author encourages this gathering together “so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” For the first-century Jews, there was great persecution lying ahead. This was spoken to them plainly by Jesus, and it was understood that the temple would be destroyed and the people would be scattered (along with all the other horrors spoken of by the Lord).

But this also applies to those Jews who will come to realize that Christ is the Messiah after the rapture of the church. As noted in previous commentaries, Hebrews is logically placed after Paul’s Gentile-led church age epistles as an

indication that the words are actually more relevant to the Jews of the end times than at any other time. They will need to assemble and continue exhorting one another as the Day of Christ's second coming draws near.

Life application: This is the most specific verse in the Bible telling believers (the truths here apply to all in intent) to not fail to assemble with other believers. All other verses merely imply attendance in some way or another. In other words, Jesus speaks of taking matters "to the church" in Matthew 18:17. Paul mentions the duties of elders and deacons in his epistles. To the Colossians, he says, "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea" (Colossians 4:16). This implies people are assembling, and that their gathering is regularly set. Jesus tells John, "What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea" (Revelation 1:11). Again, this implies that these churches would receive and hear the words of the letter while meeting. The implied evidences are many and there's no excuse for failing to meet. The age-old excuse that "The church is filled with hypocrites" is:

- True.
- A feeble excuse.
- Implies that the person stating this lives hypocrite-free the rest of his life, but such is not the case; everyone is guilty of hypocrisy.

People who find an excuse to not assemble with others don't have problems with the church, but problems with themselves. Be sure to not forsake the gathering together with other believers for the worship of God, for gaining knowledge of the word, for personal edification, for encouragement of self and others, and for prayers which are lifted up to God.

Lord God, You've ordained that believers in Christ Jesus meet together as a congregation. You wouldn't have done so unless it was honoring to You and beneficial to us. Therefore, give us the wisdom, the desire, and the ability to regularly meet and raise holy hands to Your honor and glory! Amen.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, Hebrews 10:26

Paul now begins this verse with "For." He is making a continued addition to what he has already presented. Throughout the chapter, he has been speaking about the sacrifice of Christ. He began with the thought that the temple sacrifices were only a shadow of what is coming in Christ (verse 1). He then said that because of this they could never take away sin (verse 4). He then went on to explain that the same writings which mandated those sacrifices also stated that One would come to replace them, and that in His coming, the second (covenant) would replace the first (verses 5-9).

In verse 10, he then said that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*." After this, he again noted that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could "never take away sins" (verse 11). In verse 18, explaining the scope of Christ's sacrifice, he then said, "Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin." After stating these truths, he then entered into exhortations for a proper walk with Christ, and to do so "much the more as you see the Day approaching" (verse 25).

It is this context which "For" is now introduced. From it, he makes an obvious statement by saying, "if we sin willfully." The word is a new one in the Bible, and it is found only here and in 1 Peter 5:2. It signifies "voluntarily." It is an act of free will. He then next says, "after we have received the knowledge of the truth." It is a word used frequently by Paul and which indicates "knowledge of a particular point."

It is speaking about the knowledge of Christ's fulfillment of the pictures, types, and shadows of the Old; that He alone can take away sin. And what is the result of a rejection of such knowledge? The author says, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." Well, of course not! And, what is the willful sin? It is to reject Jesus.

The author is speaking to the Hebrew people about what Christ has done. If they reject Him, there is nothing that can atone for their sin. The temple was still standing at the time of the letter. Another temple is prophesied to be coming someday as well. The sacrifices which are conducted there cannot take away sin. To go back to them then is to reject Christ Jesus' offering and it is willful sin. As He replaced those sacrifices, there is no longer a sacrifice which can be found suitable.

This verse is not speaking of individual sin after being saved. It is speaking of those of Israel who determine to return to the temple, to its sacrifices, and to works which could never save in the first place. The author has already said (as noted above) that "where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin."

Paul had said in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that for those in Christ, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

Similarly, John says in 1 John 2:12 –

"I write to you, little children,

Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."

On an individual level, accepting Christ's workplaces all of a person's sins – past, present, and future – in the past tense. Paul says that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). He also says that "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13). That is the truth of individual salvation after coming to Christ, and it is not what the author of Hebrews is speaking of in this verse.

The coming verses will continue to substantiate this. Israel has only one avenue to forgiveness. They have been given this knowledge, and they have rejected it for the most part. Some have been saved, but for any who sin by willingly rejecting Christ Jesus, then they have no other sacrifice for forgiveness. The true Day of Atonement has come in Christ. Their annual offering is without merit and it is pointless. This verse is speaking of a willful rejection of Jesus Christ by those who have not been saved by Christ, not a willful sin after being saved by Christ. Because one who is in Christ is not imputed sin.

Life application: Context clears up confusion. Understand the context; don't be confused!

Lord God, the salvation of man is found in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The temple sacrifices, which are prophesied to be coming again to Israel, are a rejection of the only offering for sin that You accept. We pray that they will see this and turn from those earthly rituals to the Heavenly Man who has fulfilled them all already. Amen.

...but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Hebrews 10:27

As noted in the previous verse, the thought being presented speaks of a willful rejection of Jesus Christ by those who are then not saved by Christ, not a willful sin after being saved by Christ. For those of Israel who hear the word, fail to

accept it, and draw back to temple worship instead of going forward to Christ, there is only “a certain fearful expectation of judgment.”

The word, “fearful,” is used for the first of three times here. All will be in Hebrews. It is the Greek word *phoberos*, and it signifies “fearful” or “terrifying,” thus prompting someone to withdraw. One can see the root of the word “phobia” there. Instead of coming near to God through Christ (Hebrews 7:19), there will be a recoiling away from Him as judgment looms.

The word translated as “judgment” is *ekdokhé*. It signifies a sentence coming out from a judge which is then passed on to the one who is judged; thus, getting what one deserves. This is exactly what can be expected for the one who rejects Christ’s sacrifice. The point of Christ’s cross is that He has received the judgment of God for man’s sin in Himself. If that is accepted, then the expectation of judgment is behind. For those who expect atonement from an animal which only looked forward to Christ, their judgment remains.

In such judgment then there can only be expected “fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” The mental picture takes the reader back as far as Numbers where the people failed to trust in the Lord. In Numbers 11, at a place called Taberah (which means Burning), the fire of the Lord came out and burned some in the camp. Again, at the time of Korah’s rebellion, fire came out from the Lord and consumed two hundred and fifty offenders who failed to believe the word of the Lord concerning the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

Such incidents were given to Israel to show them the consequences of unbelief. The fire is a demonstration of the Lord’s punishment, and that is to be the expectation of anyone who rejects the Lord’s offer of mercy and forgiveness which the Old Testament continuously pointed to.

Life application: To apply this verse to believers would be wholly inappropriate. It is being addressed 1) in judgment; 2) in expectation of the Lake of Fire (of which the Old Testament types foreshadowed); and 3) to the enemies of God. But the Bible says those who believe in Christ are safe from these things through the blood of Christ. Christian judgment is not for destruction, but for the granting or loss of rewards. Remember to always think through the purpose and intent of passages – what is being addressed and under what circumstances.

Thank You Lord that through the cross of Jesus we can be reconciled to You, and in that reconciliation, You are not counting men's sins against them. Instead of the fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire, we look forward to a judgment based on our lives as Christians. May we be found worthy of reward and not loss on that day! Amen.

Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. Hebrews 10:28

Here, the author cites a combination of Deuteronomy 13 and Deuteronomy 17 –

“...you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him. Deuteronomy 13:8

&

“Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.”
Deuteronomy 17:6

In rejecting the law, there was to be no mercy; but for capital punishment, there were to be two or three witnesses. In this, the author is citing the law itself for one who rejects that law. As the Law of Moses actually anticipated the coming of Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15), and as recognized prophets under the law

prophesied of a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31), then for the person who is determined to reject the New Covenant and the Prophet who was prophesied by Moses to come, how much more serious is the matter concerning him! If such a person wants to remain under the Old, he has actually rejected Moses' law and the punishment for such an act is already written within that law.

But, the punishment under the law is a temporal punishment. The punishment for rejecting the New Covenant then must be more severe than even that. The author will continue to explain this in the verses ahead.

Life application: As the Law of Moses could not bring about salvation, and as the Law of Moses – and prophets under that law – prophesied of a coming New Covenant, if man is to be saved, it has to come through this New Covenant. To reject what Christ has done, and to go back under the Law of Moses, is a self-condemning act. Be sure to pursue Christ and only Christ. Come to the cross, be reconciled to God, and enter into the surety of the salvation of your soul.

Lord, we are without excuse as to what choice we make in regards to the message of peace and reconciliation which is found in Christ Jesus. Likewise, those who haven't heard of it stand condemned already and will face an unpleasant eternity. Therefore, turn our hearts to the need and priority of spreading Your glorious gospel. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?
Hebrews 10:29**

The translation of these words makes it sound like the words, "Of how much," qualify the word, "worse." But rather, they qualify the whole first clause –

Of how much, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy of worse punishment...?

The verse here contrasts the previous verse which said, “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses.*” The point being made is that if temporal punishment, including death, was the response to disobedience under the Law of Moses, then how much worse punishment is the person worthy when he rejects the New Covenant which came through the blood of Christ? This is not speaking of saved believers at all. Paul says as much in 1 Timothy 1:8, 9 –

“But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.”

Rather, the words of the author now are speaking of the one “who has trampled the Son of God underfoot.” The idea of trampling something underfoot is to show contempt for that thing. When the blood of the Passover was applied to the doorways of the houses in Egypt, the people were instructed to apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel. However, nothing was said to be applied to the base of the doorway. That would have been a mark of contempt for the blood. The idea carries through to the true Passover, Christ.

To treat the blood of Christ with contempt is to have “counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing.” Scholars generally attribute these words as speaking of a saved believer who has apostatized. Such is not the case, and it would be contrary to countless other verses in Scripture which show – very clearly – that a person who is saved by Christ is eternally secure.

Rather, this is not saying that a particular person had been saved and then rejected the word. Instead, it is speaking of those in the corporate body of Israel who Christ had died for, but who rejected what He had done. It is no different than speaking of amnesty for an illegal alien. It may be offered, but he never

shows up at the office to collect his citizenship. In this case, the sanctification was available to those who heard and yet was never claimed; it was rejected.

Another example would be a rebel soldier of the civil war. When the war ended, the rebels, through a succession of amnesties and pardons, were granted the right to once again become a part of the union. For some, the condition was to accept the pardon and swear allegiance to the union. However, a true rebel (we will call him Mr. Wales) might refuse to swear allegiance, and he would thus trample underfoot the pardon he had been offered. He would have counted the ink of the offer of cessation of war, and pardon from rebellion, a common thing. He would remain apart from the union and one worthy of being hunted down and destroyed. If they can catch Mr. Wales, he will be terminated.

One must look at the original recipients to understand the context. The letter was written to first century Jews who had accepted Christ, but here they were being instructed as if they (or some Jews) hadn't. The Son of God had come, He was crucified, and He rose again to life. This was testified to the people at the feast of Pentecost after the resurrection. All men were required to attend this feast as is indicated in Exodus 23:14-17 and so all had heard the word concerning the Messiah.

If someone rejected it, he treated Christ Jesus and His precious sacrifice as “a common thing” and had “insulted the Spirit of grace.” Of this, John Chrysostom says, “He who does not accept the benefit, insults Him who confers it. He hath made thee a son: wilt thou become a slave? He has come to take up His abode with thee; but thou art introducing evil into thyself.” Chrysostom is correct with the exception of saying –

- 1) “[W]ilt thou become a slave.” Jesus was clear that all are slaves to sin (John 8:34), because “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23).
- 2) “[T]hou art introducing evil into thyself.” The evil was already present. Such a person was choosing the evil rather than being cleansed of it.

The one who rejects Christ remains a slave to sin and remains under God's wrath. He has rejected the sanctification he was offered, and he has insulted the Spirit of grace. The Holy Spirit will not take up residence in such an abode. The individual will not be sealed for the day of redemption, and only the darkness of condemnation awaits such a soul.

Life application: As has been seen several times in the book of Hebrews, verses which – on the surface – seem to point to a loss of individual salvation actually speak of something entirely different. Scripture will never contradict itself. As God has shown that individual salvation is eternal, then any verse which seems to contradict this must be thoughtfully considered. In that careful consideration, there is always a reasonable explanation which is waiting to be drawn out. Remember, context is king. Keep things in context, and difficult passages will become clear.

Thank You, O God, for the precious blood of Jesus which has the potential to sanctify all men, and which actually sanctifies any and all who come to You through faith in Him. Help us to be faithful witnesses of this glorious covenant by which men might be saved – all to Your honor and Your glory alone! Amen.

For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” Hebrews 10:30

The word “For” is given to support what was just said concerning those who trample the Son of God underfoot, count the blood of the covenant a common thing, and insult the Spirit of grace. In such conduct, the remedy comes from the Lord. As it says, “For we know Him who said.” From there, the author will cite two thoughts which stem from the Old Testament. The first comes from the Song of Moses as is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:35 –

“Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;
Their foot shall slip in *due* time;
For the day of their calamity *is* at hand,
And the things to come hasten upon them.”

As can be seen, the substance of the quote is the same, containing both vengeance and recompense, even if the form is changed. What will come upon those who have so rejected Christ is guaranteed because it comes from a truth which is revealed in the word of God. As the word is an extension of who God is, and as God cannot lie, then vengeance and recompense are assured.

In the author’s loose citing of Deuteronomy, he probably just called the verse to mind from memory to give the general idea of what lies ahead for those who fit the description of the previous verse. Paul also cites this same thought in Romans 12 –

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” Romans 12:19

In both Romans and Hebrews, the exact same words are used in the Greek, but because they don’t match either the Hebrew or the Greek of the Old Testament, there are a few possibilities concerning the quote –

- 1) There is another common source, apart from the original Hebrew and the Greek OT, which the authors of Romans and Hebrews cite.
- 2) The words had become a proverbial saying, and so Paul and the author of Hebrews both say it as it had become commonly stated. Or,
- 3) Paul is the author of both Romans and Hebrews.

The third option is the most likely, as was explained in the introductory comments to the book.

The second citation of the verse is a direct quote from the Greek translation of Deuteronomy 32:36 (cited here from the Hebrew) –

“For the Lord will judge His people
And have compassion on His servants.”

It is also substantially found again in Psalm 135:14 –

“For the Lord will judge His people,
And He will have compassion on His servants.”

In these quotes, the author is showing that the Lord’s people, meaning Israel, are not above being singled out for His wrath and punishment. As noted in the previous verse, this is speaking of those of Israel who rejected what Christ has offered, just as someone in the civil war (we used Mr. Wales as an example) might have rejected the amnesty offered to him. In such a case, it was the responsibility of the re-formed union to search out and destroy the unyielding rebels. So also will God search out and destroy those who refuse to come to Christ.

Life application: When it comes right down to it, we can repeat the words of Hebrews 4:13 here, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.” Despite being perceived as a cosmic pushover who overlooks sin just as we might forget it, God sees every wrong deed and – because of His righteous nature – must judge such offenses. Not only will He judge them, but He will repay them according to His very nature. Without the blood of Christ, an eternal affront to His glory (any sin) demands an eternal separation from that same glory.

Just as the cross has eternal significance for the believer, it also must carry the same eternal significance for the non-believer. Don't be lulled into a false belief that God doesn't judge – He does. The question for each soul then is "Are my sins to be judged at the cross in Jesus or at the final judgment in me?" Choose wisely today – choose Jesus.

Lord, that You have given us the choice concerning our relationship with you, it demonstrates the severity of the matter. If Jesus' cross can pay for every sin, then every sin not laid on it must be judged with condemnation. Thank You for giving us the Gift of Jesus. Thank You that we are freed from eternal punishment because of Him. Help us to get this word out to the world. Amen.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:31

This takes the reader back to the previous verses. In verse 10:27, it speaks of "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" who have willfully rejected the knowledge of the truth. In verse 10:30 while citing Scripture, it then said of those who have shamefully treated what God has done in Christ that "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And then in the same verse, again citing Scripture, "The Lord will judge His people."

With these things still fresh off the author's pen, he then says the words of this verse. It is "the living God" who is being referred to, and who the author has already mentioned in this way in Hebrews 3:12 –

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

It is the living God, who has sent Christ Jesus into the world to restore man to Himself. To reject what He has done leaves only assured condemnation. And this is

what is being seen here in the words to the Hebrews. It is calling out to them as a nation, imploring them to not turn from what He has done. Should they presume to do so, only “a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation” will be left.

And this is what came about. Israel rejected Christ, and they went into their extended time of punishment for it. They did, in fact, shamefully treat what God had done in Christ. Now, they are being regathered in the land of Israel, and that same conduct is continuing. They have the witness of believing Jews there in Israel, just as they did in the early days of the faith, but the nation as a whole has rejected this.

In this, they will continue to fall into the hands of the living God. It will be the time known as the tribulation period, and it is prophesied in the book of Zechariah that two-thirds of the nation will perish – all because of their attitude towards Christ. As Vincent’s Word Studies says of this verse, “The living God, revealed in the living Christ, will not suffer his sacrificial gift and his covenant to be slighted and insulted with impunity.” Albert Barnes then explains what this means. He says--

“To fall into his hands, therefore, ‘for the purpose of punishment’ – which is the idea here – is fearful:

- (1) because he has all power, and can inflict just what punishment he pleases;
- (2) because he is strictly just, and will inflict the punishment which ought to be inflicted;
- (3) because he lives forever, and can carry on his purpose of punishment to eternal ages; and

(4) because the actual inflictions of punishment which have occurred show what is to be dreaded.”

Life application: One thing is made perfectly clear in the Bible; there is one God and only one path to that God – Jesus Christ. Throughout history, man has made his god in his image rather than acknowledging that we are made in God’s image. How often people will openly claim “I believe all paths lead to God.” Such a statement shows:

- 1) a lack of understanding of the nature of God, and
- 2) a belief (or hidden hope) that they are of more value than they really are in the sight of infinite holiness.

As Jeremiah 10:10 says –

“But the Lord *is* the true God;
He *is* the living God and the everlasting King.
At His wrath the earth will tremble,
And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.”

There is little point in trying to scare people into heaven by promising hell, but there is a place for warning people about the consequences of rejecting God. If “heaven” is real, then a place which isn’t heaven (namely hell) must also be real because the Bible speaks of both. The Bible would not speak of one as a reality and the other as a myth. If the cross has eternal significance for those who believe, then it must – by the very nature of what occurred – have eternal significance for those who reject it. Think it through. Truly, it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

O God, how can one stand in Your infinitely glorious presence and presume to claim a righteousness of his own? But praise be to You, O God, for giving us a righteousness not our own – that of Jesus – to cover over our stains. All praise and glory belong to You! Amen.

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: Hebrews 10:32

The author now changes from words of warning to words of encouragement. This is something he has done before. He tells of the perils associated with the issue at hand, and then he encourages his audience concerning it. His warnings went from verse 10:26 – 10:31. The words of encouragement now go until the end of the chapter.

And so, to encourage them, he gives a contrasting “But.” It is to remind them that though the things he warned against are possible, they have already proven that, as a group, it is unlikely that it will come about. In this, he asks them to “recall the former days.” It is obvious that they had been tested in the past, and they had prevailed in remaining strong. In recalling the past, he is asking them to continue in that same strength they once relied upon.

He then says that those former days of trial were, “after you were illuminated.” Here, the translators chose to translate the Greek as “illuminated.” However, the same word, using the same context and parsing, was translated as “enlightened” in verse 6:4. In order to maintain consistency of thought, it should be translated as such here as well. He is making a statement concerning his thoughts there which now require encouragement.

From there he notes that after their enlightenment, “you endured a great struggle.” The word is *athl sis*, and it is a noun found only here. One can see the root of our modern word “athlete” in it. Paul had used the verb form of the word

when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5. He is saying that they had endured this great contest at some time in the past, and it was “with sufferings.”

Here again, he uses a word that was previously used when speaking of Christ Jesus. In verses 2:9 and 2:10, he wrote of Christ’s sufferings. It is likely that he is noting that just as Christ suffered, so did his readers. Christ prevailed over them, and so did they. He is encouraging them to continue on in that same way now. Again, Paul used this same word twice in 2 Corinthians 1 (and elsewhere) –

“For as the **sufferings** of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. ⁶ Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same **sufferings** which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.” 2 Corinthians 1:5, 6

The consistency of terminology between Paul’s letters and those of Hebrews continues to give a strong indication that Hebrews was, in fact, penned by Paul.

Life application: The author is reminding his audience of the trials that these people had shouldered. In remembering, he asks them to stand now just as “you stood your ground.” Certainly, this is applicable to us today. Some of us came to Christ at church, via a radio program, or maybe a knock on the door. For many, there were tears of release from bondage, tears of anguish over past sins, and maybe tears of joy at the promise of eternal life in the presence of this wonderful Lord. At the same time, some may have felt the stress of giving up an old style of life which was incompatible with the life Christ expects. Some may have faced criticism from family, friends, or coworkers. Whatever trials – be they small or great – that arose, there was a willingness to face them because of the precious faith found in Christ. Has that faith diminished? Has that faith gotten cold or been altogether abandoned? The Bible asks you to look to the former days and remember your willingness to endure. The promise in Christ is sure and your faith will be rewarded.

O Lord, we look to You in anticipation of the glory ahead, but we need You to be with us now during our great trials of faith and testing as well. Thank You for the promise that You will never leave us nor forsake us. Glory, honor, and majesty...they belong to You alone! Amen.

...partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;
Hebrews 10:33

The author now adds on to the previous thought which asked the reader to remember when they “endured a great struggle with sufferings.” He then describes that by saying, “partly while you were made a spectacle.” The words literally read, “being on display in the theater.” The verb is *theatrizó*, and it is only found here in the Bible. It means “to ridicule, making a *public spectacle* out of someone, putting them on *exhibit* for *public jest and mockery*” (HELPS Word Studies). That, in turn, is derived from the noun, *theatron*, meaning a theater, or a public exhibition.

That is seen three other times in the New Testament, in Acts and in 1 Corinthians. The Acts account is exactly the type of treatment the author speaks of when he says, “by reproaches and tribulations” –

“So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. ³⁰ And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. ³¹ Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.” Acts 19:29-31

Paul personally speaks of it as well in 1 Corinthians 4:9 –

“For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.”

The words of Paul here which said, “been made a spectacle,” are literally “been made a theater.” It is this same treatment that the author asks the Hebrews to remember concerning their early life in Christ. They had openly professed Christ, and they had openly and publicly suffered because of it, both by reproach, and by actual affliction. But he also continues with, “partly while you became companions of those who were so treated.”

The word “companions” does not convey the meaning. One can be a companion without suffering. The word signifies “a partner,” or “a sharer.” His audience partnered in the reproaches and tribulations of others, boldly aligning themselves with those who were treated shamefully. Instead of running away at such a time, they moved toward the danger, being willing to suffer reproach for the name of Christ, rather than to share in the pleasure of the world apart from Him.

Life application: How unfamiliar are these words to many of us today! Yes, Christian persecution is coming subtly through government intrusion into our lives. Also, the radical left of the world is becoming much more violent towards individual believers. But for the most part, Christians are still protected under the constitutions which establish our governments. Because of this, there’s a continuing and loud voice of those who claim wealth and prosperity in Jesus’ name. This is simply because they haven’t figured out that “friendship with the world is enmity with God.” As time progresses though, people will be divided between those who are truly willing to call on Jesus even during suffering – looking ahead to a greater hope – and those whose faith was merely in what they could obtain from God during this life. This was also the case with the early Jewish believers. They had suffered greatly during the establishment of the church –

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” Acts 8:1

This continued as the Jewish leaders hounded the faithful. However, by the time Hebrews was written, their faith was waning. Persecution is a tiring thing on a person and it is natural to wonder where God is when you’re facing the loss of home, business, family, and even life. But this – not wealth and prosperity – is the condition that defines a faithful believer. What a mistake it is for people to think they deserve abundance when the aims and goals of Christ’s kingdom aren’t those of the world in which we live. When abundance is received, praise God! However, when it is lacking, even then... praise God!

Lord Jesus – You set the example for us when You came and lived among us in a humble and lowly state. You faced persecution, torture, and death. Help us to clearly see that if this is also our lot, we should be thankful for the honor. And if You provide us abundance, let us not be haughty or arrogant in the wealth that You alone provided. Thank You Lord. Amen.

...for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Hebrews 10:34

There is a dispute about the correct rendering of the first clause of this verse. The addition of *mou* (my) in some texts causes there to be a change in intent –

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners (NASB)

...for you had compassion on me in my chains (NKJV)

The correct reading is argued, but it doesn't change the fact that the audience had compassion on one or more in prison. However, simply for the sake of consistency, the words are probably speaking of the plural, prisoners. That would then be in line with Hebrews 13:3, and also the tenor of the rest of the clauses.

Going with that as the true rendering, it shows that when other believers were persecuted, they not only would become companions with them (see previous verse), but they also would sympathize with their state, bringing them food, clothing, or whatever else they could. And not only that, but they also "joyfully accepted the plundering" of their goods.

Being plundered for one's faith is something which has occurred throughout the church age, and it was common at the time of the writing of Hebrews as well. But the author's words don't just say that people came in and took what the believers possessed against their will. Rather, the faithful joyfully accepted what was occurring – "Go ahead! Take it! This is just stuff. What I possess in Christ cannot be taken from me!" It is in line with Jesus' own words concerning the things of this life –

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:32-34

Surely remembering the words of the Lord, they knew that they had "a better and an enduring possession" awaiting them. Again, there is a dispute concerning whether the words "in heaven" are in the original or not –

...knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.
NASB

...knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. NKJV

Either way, the promise stands. A better and enduring possession lies ahead. It is a lasting one because it is a heavenly one. With this knowledge, the things of this world, then, hold far less value. The author is calling these things to remembrance, asking them to hold fast to that same assurance, and to not be caught up in the temporary things which perish, and which can so easily distract their attention from faithful obedience to the Lord.

Life application: Have you ever heard of Robert Morris, one of the US Founding Fathers? Read the following quote about him by Robert G. Ferris in his book about the signers of the US Constitution –

“Merchant Robert Morris was a man of many distinctions. One of the wealthiest individuals in the Colonies and an economic wizard, he won the accolade ‘Financier of the Revolution,’ yet died penniless and forgotten. He and Roger Sherman were the only signers of all three of the Nation's basic documents: the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and Constitution. Morris... also served as a Senator in the First Congress...”

Mr. Morris literally gave all of his worldly wealth in order to help finance a cause in which he believed. Except for a few history buffs, he's been entirely forgotten by the nation he helped to forge. Now, think about the innumerable people who have given their lives for an infinitely greater cause – that of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Unmarked graves swell the soil of distant lands, filled with those who have found eternal life; men and women have died in poverty, and yet have attained eternal wealth; causes which seemed hopeless have turned into everlasting joy, all because of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. What are you willing to give up in order that you might secure everlasting life, riches, and happiness? Think on this today, the consequences of your decision will span the ages, even for eternity.

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Timothy 1:17

Lord Jesus, open our hearts and minds to see the eternal and not the temporary. Keep us from squandering those riches which are true riches. And Lord, never let us forget to look back to the torturous cross in order to inspire us to move – ever forward – in the pursuit of Your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

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

Hebrews 10:35

The word translated as “confidence” should be translated as “boldness.” The author is making a connection to verse 3:6 where the reader was admonished to “hold fast the boldness of hope.” The word, “Therefore,” directs the reader to review the previous verses, and to act according to what the author has already submitted. With this understanding, he then says, “do not cast away your [boldness].”

The people, as already noted, have been bold in their actions. His exhortation is to not shrink back from this. Rather, they are to stand fast and be bold, “which has great reward.” What that great reward is will be explained in the verses to come.

Some older scholars note that the author may have been thinking of the ancient Greek warriors who went into battle carrying shields for protection. If a warrior cast away that shield in fear during the battle, it was the highest disgrace, punishable by death. Paul notes the shield of faith in Ephesians 6:16, and he may be asking the reader to hold that shield no matter what. To cast it away would only lead to a sad end.

Life application: In an attempt to not be a downer, it is nice to focus on the happy and uplifting side of the Bible. However, there is a place for understanding our difficulties in Christ as well. At least as much is said of the trials and hardships we can expect as of the blessings. But, despite being promised trouble in this life, Jesus gives us an eternal promise that is so much greater. This is the point of the recent verses of Hebrews. The writer understood the trials the believers were facing. He knew there was an easier path that would have been a lot more comfortable in the short term. But the faithful Christian's life isn't just about comfort, ease, and prosperity. Rather, it is about persevering during trials. The majority of the first chapter of the book of James is about how to persevere during these situations. When the persevering is finished and this earthly life ends, the patience and confidence we possess will be richly rewarded. Humans have an infinitely small speck of eternity in this earthly body and yet we anxiously grab at every moment as if it were all we were given. For the believer, such is not the case! When Christ comes for His church, the difficult years we have spent will all but be forgotten. As Jesus said in the last chapter of the book of Revelation –

“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” Revelation 22:12

If we are to be rewarded according to our work, let us endeavor to work while we can and forget about pursuing the things of this world. Fun now will mean a loss when He comes. Our patient endurance and hard work for His kingdom will have eternal benefit. Press on!

Lord, give us minds to see the eternal and not just the temporary. Turn our hearts to the satisfaction of living out our present hours for You and for Your glory that we may receive that rich reward promised in Your word. Yes Lord, help us not to squander our eternal blessing in the here and now. Amen.

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: Hebrews 10:36

The words here explain the thought of the previous verse where the author spoke of not casting away one's confidence because it has great reward. That great reward, which lies yet ahead, is what is being referred to starting with, "For you have need of endurance." In verses 10:32-34, the author described the hardships that had been faced by his readers. In not casting away their continued confidence, they would need to endure. This implies that the hardships of the past can be expected in the future as well.

When such hardships come, there is no sense in throwing in the towel and calling it quits. The course has been set, the prize is yet ahead, and in the interim, believers are to maintain the faith needed to endure. With this in mind, the author then shows that this is what is expected of believers. This is found in the words, "so that after you have done the will of God." We are not given tests, trials, hardships, and pains in order to frustrate us, but to challenge us to remain steadfast. If believers give up their faith because of tough times, then how are they any different than non-believers?

But because there is the anticipation of future glory, there should be a willingness to endure through these frustrations with a sound, and even joyful, hope. The end goal of this, as stated by the author, is that "you may receive the promise." This is what was stated at the end of verse 10:34 with the words, "knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven."

The promise is the enduring possession found in heaven. This same promise is alluded to in Hebrews 11:13 & 11:39. Those who had gone before, under the Old Testament, had been given the promises. They patiently waited for them, living in faith that what God had promised would someday be realized. Now, in Christ, that promise is assured to believers. As this is so, how much more should we endure by faith, which is the will of God, and thus receive the promise? This is what the author is trying to get across to his audience.

Just because we are in Christ, we are still in this world. We are still in fallen bodies which have temptations, limitations, and frustrations galore. It is not this world which is our hope. If it were, we wouldn't have much of a hope. But it is the promise which lies ahead that we are to hold fast to. The inheritance is assured. And so, despite our weaknesses, we are asked to hold fast to the promises of God.

Life application: The words of this verse are similar to that of 1 Timothy 4:16 –

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

Paul asked Timothy to persevere in his “life and doctrine.” Like Paul, the author of Hebrews asks his audience to persevere in doing “the will of God.” Outside of the Bible, we have no special revelation of the will of God. We can only determine things about Him from creation. But through the Bible, we have specific insights into God's nature, His standards for us, and His purposes and promises. The promises include rewards based on our faithfulness in carrying out our Christian lives. Salvation is a gift and something we can in no ways merit apart from the work of Jesus, and eternal life is a promise based on our salvation. They go hand in hand. Our rewards, which come with a promise, result from what we do with the salvation He has provided. Therefore they must be eternal in nature.

One thing we do which deserves reward is to persevere. We are promised a reward for continued faithfulness. This should be obvious without ever being said. The Bible tells us that God is ever faithful so it shouldn't be any surprise that faithfulness on our part reflects His image and is something we can expect to be rewarded for.

Are you living faithfully for Christ and watching your life and your doctrine closely? Be attentive to the few short years you have been given. Squandering eternal rewards because of temporary pressures, temptations, setbacks, or trials is hardly worth it. When you are feeling any of these, find a close friend to help redirect your steps, or do a topical study in the Bible to redirect your ways. In all things,

remember to persevere, “so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive the promise.”

Lord Jesus, keep us from the pressures, temptations, setbacks, and trials which take our heart and our focus off of You. Direct our steps each and every day and keep our hearts softened to the things You require. In turn, we will follow where You lead all our days. But Lord, should such trials come, help us to endure through them, honoring You with our lives and actions to the best of our ability. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

“For yet a little while,

And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Hebrews 10:37

Here, the author will quote Habakkuk 2:3, 4 in this verse and in the next –

“For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time;
But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
Because it will surely come,
It will not tarry.

⁴“Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.”

The quote here in Hebrews follows the Greek translation of the Old Testament. However, the words, “For yet a little while,” are not a part of the quote, but are actually taken from Isaiah 26:20 –

“Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past.”

The Greek of this verse in Hebrews actually says, “For yet a very little while.” It is an emphatic statement that a time of indignation lies ahead, and it shall be completed according to God’s perfect timetable.

Understanding this, the context is important to remember. The author has spoken of the need for endurance so that the audience may receive the promise. He now speaks of the need for this at a set time which has a certain end – “For yet a very little while.” Having taken these words from Isaiah 20, a passage which speaks of a time of indignation, it can be seen that this is speaking of a time of persecution upon the Hebrew people. Jesus spoke of these things in the synoptic gospels, such as in Matthew 24 –

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” Matthew 24:6

As has been stated elsewhere in the Hebrews commentary, the placement of the book – after Paul’s church-age epistles – is an indication that, though Hebrews is immediately addressed to first-century Jewish believers, it actually takes up its proper place in redemptive history after the church age. The Jews will again be the main focus of God’s attention, and for those who come to faith in Christ Jesus, there will be a need for real endurance. They will go through the tribulation period, but there will eventually be relief. And so, after the “very little while,” the author says that “He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”

The Greek literally reads, “THE COMER will come.” It is a clear reference to Christ’s second advent. He will come to deliver His people, but until He comes, a time of endurance will be needed. His people will need to hold onto their faith (as will be

seen in the coming verse), and hold fast to the hope which they have been promised.

Life application: By quoting Habakkuk the author makes a few points –

- 1) Habakkuk was speaking of the revelation of the coming Christ;
- 2) This revelation was still future at the time of Hebrews and before Jesus' anticipated second coming, therefore;
- 3) There is a set time for Christ's return which will occur exactly as God has pre-determined.

Those who received the letter and those who still wait for this day shouldn't be concerned about the term, "in just a very little while," as if it should have come by now. Remember Peter's words –

"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:8. ⁹

God's timing is not our timing and it serves an important purpose. Christ will return at exactly the right moment. He will first come at the rapture for those of the church, and then He will come at His second advent to save Israel, and in particular, to be glorified among those who endured in their faith in anticipation of that marvelous day. Keep looking up...the King is coming!

Lord, to You a thousand years is like a day, but to us it is a really long time. We look forward to Your return for us with eager anticipation. Thy will be done, O Lord, but may it be soon! How great will be the day when we see Your face. Amen.

**Now the just shall live by faith;
But if *anyone* draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him.” Hebrews 10:38**

The words here are a citation of the Greek translation of Habakkuk 2:4. The Hebrew reads a bit differently and in inverted order –

“Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.”

Paul has cited this same verse twice, in Romans 1:17 & Galatians 3:11. It is his main source for the doctrine of justification by faith alone, apart from works. With that being so, he builds upon the thought in great detail. Using that same verse from Habakkuk now, the author begins with the portion of the verse which deals with the just, saying, “Now the just shall live by faith.”

It is an obvious statement which speaks for itself. The one who is just lives by his faith. What is of most controversy in this verse is the middle clause. The author next says, “But if *anyone* draws back.” The word “anyone” is inserted, and it is argued that it is inserted incorrectly. The verse reads, “But if draws back.” Further the conjunction, *kai*, generally means “and,” but it can mean a host of things based on the context. The most obvious rendering, however, is “and.” Therefore, “And if draws back.” The use of “but” instead of “and,” while also inserting the word “anyone” by the translators, is based on a presupposition that it is not speaking of the subject of the first clause, but of a person who fails to come to Christ.

The word rendered “draws back” means just that. It is a person who retreats. With this in mind, the general idea of many scholars is that this is referring to the one in the first clause. He is just, he lives by faith, and he draws back. If so, the author then says, “My soul has no pleasure in him.”

In this, it is argued that one can lose their salvation by retreating from the faith. However, this is problematic for two main reasons. The first is that it would be contrary to other verses which clearly indicate salvation is a one time, for all time, event. Secondly, the next verse will contrast what is said in this verse. That will reveal the full extent of what is seen in these words, particularly the difficult, middle clause.

Life application: Paul’s citations of Habakkuk 2:4 form the principle theme of the Christian life – faith in something beyond oneself. This includes faith that salvation is of the Lord; faith that we cannot be justified by our own works; faith that God will keep His promises; faith that our trials are being experienced for our good; etc. If I say, “I have faith that I can climb this mountain,” then I am placing trust in my own abilities – even though there are unknown aspects of the climb such as weather, snakes, falling off a cliff, and so on.

However, I am still trusting that I have the ability to overcome these, and any other, obstacles that arise. On the other hand, God asks us to put our faith in Him. We are to have faith that He has spoken to humanity and this conversation is recorded in the Bible. This record says we are separated from God who is otherwise unknowable, except as revealed in nature and in Scripture.

The Bible points to Jesus. Jesus is the incarnate Word of God and, therefore, He makes the unknowable understandable. But what we know of Jesus is recorded in the Bible. Therefore we must have faith that the Bible is God’s word to us. As you can see, a great deal of the Christian life involves understanding the process of receiving the Bible, analyzing its context, and being sure of its reliability. Once our faith in the Bible is sound, we can trust that what it says about Jesus is accurate. If it is, then our faith in Him is sound. If our faith in Him is sound, then we have every confidence that our faith in God is sound. And our faith in God tells us that

it's all about Jesus. Have faith in God, as revealed in His word, and thus, have faith in Jesus.

Lord, misdirected faith is of no value at all. Help our faith to be properly directed, and give us wisdom to understand and accept the reliability of the Bible. By having faith in Your word, we can then have faith in what it tells us about Jesus. And what it tells us about Him is glorious! Thank You for our Jesus! Amen.

But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Hebrews 10:39

How is it possible that the author can say this to a group of people that he has just warned that they could lose their salvation? He makes his assertion in the nominative first person plural, "we." If the loss of salvation was possible, how could he speak for himself of a yet unknown future, and even more for a group of others in this regard? The answer is, "He could not." But yet, he avers with all certainty, beginning with the word, "But." It is a complete contrast to the one who "draws back" in the previous verse.

From there, he says, "we are not of those who draw back to perdition." Again, he has made a statement which, if false, would mean that he – or any of his audience who had believed in Christ – could draw back to perdition. He has put his reputation on the line that not a single believer who receives his word (which must include all believers at all times who have received his word) will not draw back to perdition. Rather, they are "of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

These words precisely reveal that "belief" equates to "saving of the soul." The words in Greek are both nouns, not verbs, and so it simply says "faith" and "possession." Therefore, a literal translation is "but of faith to *the* possession of *the* soul." If faith equates to possession of the soul, then it is exactly what Paul's

doctrine of justification by faith alone says. In fact, the word “possession,” (translated in this verse as “saving”), is used by Paul in three times –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased **possession**, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to **obtain** salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:9

“to which He called you by our gospel, for the **obtaining** of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 2:14

Likewise, Peter uses the word one last time in his first epistle –

“But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own **special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” 1 Peter 2:9

Each of these demonstrates possession of a thing. Properly considered, the author is not speaking of a loss of salvation, but the surety of it. Talk about a great verse to end chapter 10! At times during Chapter 10 one might think the author was a stern college professor, at others a downer, and at others a nagging conscience, but in the end he draws everything he has said together into the work of a cheerleader. You have done it! Your faith has made you His possession! You will receive the prize!

Life application: How can one read this verse and not feel the confidence of every good thing which is found in Christ? He is writing to young people and old; those new in the faith and those with years of faithfulness behind them; men and

women; the healthy and the infirm. And yet his conclusion to these recipients is, “you will make it!” How can he confidently say we won’t shrink back to destruction? Especially when we will all shrink back at some point in our lives. It is because Christ’s name resides in the believer. Our failings do not – in fact they cannot – negate His faithfulness. If you are saved, His promise is that you can never lose that salvation. As the Bible says elsewhere –

“Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.” Romans 3:4

Paul was speaking, in that Roman’s verse, of God’s righteousness in comparison to ours. Likewise, the author here is implying that we can’t shrink back to destruction; we have believed and we are saved. How could anything be more glorious than to know it is not up to us! Despite many denominations saying that we need to “participate” in our continued salvation, the Bible says otherwise. God, who is ever-faithful, is in complete control of the Christian soul. Hallelujah and amen!

What an absolute honor and blessing to know that You are in complete control of our eternal destiny, O Lord. When we fail, when we slip, when we fall as if to have lost it all, You graciously intervene on our behalf – ever faithful in the promise You have made to Your children. O, how we love You! Amen.

CHAPTER 11

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

Hebrews 11:1

The author will now explain what faith is. This is not a sudden change in direction. Instead, it is based on what he has said in the previous verses –

“For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith;
But if *anyone* draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him.’

³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” Hebrews 10:37-39

He explains what that faith which is being referred to in those verses is. The assumption made from the chapter is that those who are mentioned in a positive light for their faith are saved. They have “obtained a good testimony through faith” (verses 11:2 & 11:39). Further, they will be made perfect along with us (verse 11:40).

This is important to understand, because the faith that they displayed was what set them apart with a good testimony. One, for example, is the harlot Rahab. The act of faith that she demonstrated was 1) as a Gentile, 2) not yet brought into the covenant people of Israel, and 3) at the beginning of her interactions with the God of Israel. Outside of the one account, she is mentioned in a genealogy in Matthew, but nothing she did for the rest of her life is recorded. The single act of faith is described, and yet verse 40 implies that this single act of faith (which included her deeds of faith as described in verse 31 and in James 2:25) is what made her acceptable to be perfected along with God’s people, as verse 40 says.

The reason this is important, is because it then clearly shows that the verses of chapter 10 (and elsewhere) which seem to be pointing to a loss of salvation for believers are not speaking of that at all. The act of faith in the Lord God, as He works out His redemptive plans leading to Messiah, or looking back on the work of Messiah, is sufficient to please Him and bring a person to a right standing before Him – once and for all time.

With this understanding, the author now begins Chapter 11 with, “Now faith is.” He will first describe what faith is. In the Greek, the verb begins the sentence, “Is now faith.” There is no article before the word faith, and so he is speaking about faith in an abstract sense. He is not saying, “Now ‘the’ faith is,” as if speaking of what the Christian faith is. Rather, he is explaining the term in a general manner which applies to any and all types of faith.

From there he says that faith “is the substance of things hoped for.” The word “substance” has been seen twice already in Hebrews (verses 1:3 and 3:14). It is a compound word meaning “a setting under.” Thus, it is a support. Therefore, it signifies absolute confidence; assurance. This assurance is in “things hoped for.” It isn’t as if what is hoped for is simply, “O gee, I hope this happens.” It is, “I am absolutely sure that this will come about.” There is the complete assurance that what is expected will come to pass.

The simple example of preparing to sit on a chair reveals this. One sees a chair that they have never sat on before. The person is tired and wants to sit down. Instead of very slowly and carefully easing into the chair to see if it can hold his weight, he simply plops down. In other words, there is a concrete assurance that the hoped-for ease of sitting will be realized exactly as intended. The individual has faith in the structure of the chair based on a directed mental analysis of it, or maybe having watched others sit in it or another chair like it. There is an understanding of the reality of the matter, and then action based on that understanding. As Vincent’s Word Studies says, “It is the firm grasp of faith on unseen fact.”

With this stated, the author then says that faith is “the evidence of things not seen.” The word is used one other time, in 2 Timothy 3:16, where it is translated as “reproof.” It is a proof or conviction. HELPS Word Studies says, “*inner conviction* focuses on God *confirming His inbirthing of faith.*” One cannot see the results of sitting in a chair until he sits in the chair. And yet, there is an inner conviction that plopping down into the chair will not result in a broken chair and a resulting painful bulging disk in the spine. Rather, there is every reason to believe that the hope of sitting will be realized in a comfortable sit.

Taking these two concepts as one, it is clear that faith is not a dubious thing at all. It is something which is based on a rational view of a matter which is grounded in reality.

Life application: This verse starts Chapter 11, known as the Hall of Fame of Faith. It sets the tone for the entire chapter and is the most explicit description of faith to be found both in the Bible and outside of it. Every instance of faith recorded elsewhere will find its basis in it –

Faith is being sure 1) of what we hope for, and 2) of what we do not see.

These two points then form the hallmark of the Christian’s walk. Take any situation requiring faith and turn it into a series of questions. If you can affirmatively answer the first question(s), but not the last, then your faith is sound.

The Bible claims to be the word of God. Is your hope grounded in this? Are you confident this is so? Can you absolutely prove it?

The Bible says Jesus will deliver you from condemnation. Is this your hope? Are you completely confident that He will accomplish it? Has it happened yet?

Faith then will validate whether a person's claim of having seen, touched, or talked to Jesus is true – Do you believe in Jesus? Have you ever seen Jesus?

If someone answers those last two questions as Yes and then No. They have faith in Jesus. If he answers Yes and then Yes, faith is excluded. He has “seen.” As the Bible says we “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), then it is certain that this person is wrong – intentionally or unintentionally. Nothing in our current dispensation will contradict the Bible. It is not to be expected that we will see Jesus before He returns for His church, despite the countless claims to the contrary. Why can this claim be made? Because we have “faith” in the truth of Scripture.

There must always be a negative answer involved in each question or faith is not a consideration. A hope that is seen is no hope at all; it has become experience. But an unseen hope on which we place our trust is faith. One final thought – if our faith is misdirected, it is a wasted faith. Every act of faith requires an unknown, but it should be a leap backed by sound reasoning. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Instead, it is a step into revealed light. In the case of proper theology, it is a step into God's revealed light.

Lord, we can only direct our faith in one direction, but there are a zillion possibilities out there. In the end, our faith is really up to You and Your divine hand of providence upon our lives. And so we ask You to direct it and to give us reasonable assurance that it is properly placed. We thank You for this, knowing You will guide us as we seek You. Amen.

For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony. Hebrews 11:2

The word “For” introduces a real-life explanation of what was stated in the preceding verse. “By it” is speaking of faith, the main subject of verse 1. In order to show the value of faith to the reader, the author then chooses a subject

concerning faith which will continue to be used throughout the chapter, which is “the elders.”

The word in Greek is *presbuteros*. It signifies “a mature *man* having seasoned judgment” (HELPS Word Studies). How to correctly translate this is a bit difficult. Vincent’s Word Studies argues that “Fathers” is better. However, that isn’t so. There are a couple of women (Sarah and Rahab) who will be cited by name as examples in this list, and the general term “women” will also be used in verse 35.

Some translational choices have been: the ancients, the people in days of old, the people of old, the men of old, the elders, our ancestors, people of ancient times, the saints of old, etc. As seen, some are rather good paraphrases, such as “our ancestors.” Others fail to include the women, such as “men of old.” Maybe the word, “elders,” is the best. As the masculine of such words in both the Greek and English traditionally stands for all those spoken of, including women, it properly defines the term while not making the error of excluding women entirely. Regardless as to the word chosen, the author is speaking of those of faith from the past. It is they who, by demonstrating faith, “obtained a *good* testimony.”

From this, the author will go on to give a noble list of names of those who simply took God at His word, and who were considered as pleasing to Him because of it.

Life application: It must have been both interesting and hard to grasp for the early Hebrew Christians to read this verse and to reflect on what the author was saying. After 1500 years of observing the law, they had surely come to think that they participated in their righteousness before God. But the writer says otherwise, as does the rest of the New Testament.

After defining faith in the previous verse, the author now states that it is faith which pleases God, and it is that for which we receive commendation. If you think about it logically, it must be so. God told the Israelites to put blood on their doorposts at the Passover. Did the blood save them or was it that they had faith, believing in what God asked them to do in applying the blood? God later asked

them to sacrifice for their sins at the temple. Did these sacrifices restore them to God or was it faith in what they symbolized?

How you answer these questions is of no small matter. In fact, the same debate rages on in Christianity today. A large percentage of those who follow Christ believe that we participate in our justification. In fact, it's one of the principle differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestant theology. Roman Catholicism says that we must participate in our justification. In their poor theology, if we fail to die in a righteous state, it's off to purgatory with our soul.

But the term "justification," as used in the Bible, literally means, "to declare righteous." In other words, Paul says that the moment we put our faith in Christ, we are justified. Only one option is correct – that we are justified by Christ alone, through faith alone, by God's grace alone. There is nothing we can add to this justification. When we attempt to do so, we state "God, what you did in the Person of Jesus, your Son, was insufficient to save me." In essence, we reject the very salvation that He has provided.

Don't be deluded – there is nothing you can do to add to the work of Jesus Christ. Stand firm in what He has done and... Have faith!

Lord, our souls praise You for the great and awesome deeds which You alone have accomplished on our behalf. Forgive us for ever-striving to add to what You have done when, in fact, what You have done is fully sufficient to restore us to You and to keep us eternally secure. We trust in You, we rest in You, we glory... in You alone. Amen!

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:3

The previous verse mentioned that it was by faith that the elders obtained their testimony. The author now begins to give examples of what it means to exercise faith, but he does not begin with that of the elders. Instead, he begins with the framing of the universe. Thus, what he says here includes something that requires faith in all men at all times.

“By faith” signifies that even now, what is recorded concerning creation requires a mark of faith to accept. There is, and there always will be, an unknown aspect of the working of God in creation. But Scripture has given us an account of what God did. As this cannot be fully comprehended by us, then “By faith we understand.” In other words, “The Bible says these things, and it is by that word that we understand that they came about, but it is only by faith in that word that we can fully accept what is written. And that is speaking of “the worlds.”

The word in Greek is *aiōnas*, ages. This is more than just the worlds which fill the universe, but everything associated with the universe. In other words, before God created those things which comprise the universe – time, space, matter, etc, there was only God. The author is saying that we cannot comprehend the act of God’s creation as it is, but can only, by faith, accept the account as given by Scripture which says that the ages “were framed.”

The Greek word signifies “to prepare,” or “to mend.” It is used, for example, of the apostles mending their nets. The nets needed to be fixed in order to work properly again. In the same manner, God “prepared,” or “fashioned,” the universe in such a way that all things work properly. Everything is as it should be, and every discovery we make fits into that woven tapestry of the universe. This is from its overall size and structure, down to the smallest conceivable particle (quark, string, or whatever is claimed to be the minutest thing in existence). Further, the entire framing of the ages (meaning time) must fit into this construction. God created time, and therefore all time is known and apprehended by God – even into

eternity itself. Nothing is unknown to Him from age to age. Thus, all redemptive history was known to Him before He spoke the first word of creation. All were “framed by the word of God.”

God spoke, and the universe came into being. Nothing apart from God existed, and now these things exist. Einstein demonstrated that time cannot exist without space or matter, space cannot exist without time or matter, and matter cannot exist without time and space. They are all interdependent on one another, and are all a part of what God created *ex nihilo* or, “out of nothing.” He did not create them out of Himself (*ex Deo*), nor did He create them out of preexisting matter (*ex hules*). These things are a fabrication of His wisdom and are by His spoken word, just as the Genesis account demonstrates. As it repeatedly says there, “Then God said...”

Next, the author continues with, “so that the things.” Some manuscripts say, “the thing.” In other words, it is speaking of all that exists in the singular. It is one giant tapestry that is beheld by man, despite having innumerable parts. All things are interwoven and interconnected into one THING. Whether this is correct, or whether it is speaking of “things,” the intent remains the same, because these things are still a part of one THING. It is a universal expanse of things “which are seen,” and which come together to form a whole. And these things, the author says, “were not made of things which are visible.”

This takes faith for us to accept. Einstein, after developing the Theory of Relativity, went on in his work attempting to discover a “theory of everything.” This is because he, and those who have followed after in this same search, did not have faith that God did what the Bible claims. Instead, they continue to look for a naturalistic explanation of the universe’s existence. But the Bible says that we are to have faith in the account. That certainly means “the account as written.”

To varying degrees, countless Christians have the same lack of faith in the biblical account that these scientists and philosophers have. They say they believe that God created, but they then say that it didn’t occur as the Bible records. But if the

author of Hebrews is citing this very Genesis account (and which he will continue to cite), then it is something that continues to require faith in each word.

The Book of Genesis and people in Genesis will be referred to until verse 22. From there, Moses will continue to be cited until verse 29. The thing is, it is Moses who received the Genesis creation account. Therefore, everything written through verse 29 requires faith that it occurred as has been recorded. And, logically, because all that is recorded in this chapter, even to the very last verse, is a part of “the ages” of what God has prepared, then we are to have faith in everything the author has presented, and will present, as it is written.

What is being relayed in this verse is not a trivial thing. Rather, his words which speak of faith in the Genesis account ask us to have faith in the entire Genesis account, and the Exodus account, and the words of Leviticus, and etc.

Life application: As has repeatedly been the case throughout history, science has had to catch up with the Bible. In addition, science validates the veracity of the Bible, and it disproves all other religious systems along the way. All things came into being at a set point in time, before which they didn’t exist. Simply stated, only monotheism is possible because of this scientific revelation. All other religious systems are proved false in the process. The details of the creation account are given in Genesis 1 and 2 and are to be held as truth, not merely considered a myth or fairy tale. There is only one truth and that truth is immutable. If science conflicts with the revelation given in the Bible, then either the science is faulty, or our understanding of the biblical account is wrong, but the Bible – as recorded – is accurate. It is therefore of great importance that we study and properly analyze the creation account if we are to know and understand what it reveals. As an interesting parallel to this verse, the same concept of creation ex nihilo is also recorded in the psalms –

For He spoke, and it was *done*;
He commanded, and it stood fast. Psalm 33:9

Think on these things and know – with certainty – that there is one God, the Creator.

Lord, let us not be so foolish as to think all religions are equal. You, O God, are logical, orderly, and infinitely wise. To assume that all religions lead to You is to assume You are incompetent and like shifting shadows. Let us never come to that conclusion. You are One, You are the God of Scripture, and You alone are to be worshiped! All other “gods” are false. Glory, majesty, splendor, and honor belong to You alone. Amen.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. Hebrews 11:4

The author now begins his list of those mentioned in verse 2 as “elders,” meaning those of the past who demonstrated faith, and who then obtained “a good testimony.” The first example takes the reader all the way back to the very beginning of man’s time on earth. The two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, are recorded in Genesis 4. The author says that “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” The specific incident referred to now reads –

“Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. ⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, ⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” Genesis 4:2-5

The words translated as “more excellent” simply mean “more.” The word is used in a comparative sense, such as, “I have ten Bibles.” “Oh yeah, well I have more.” The sacrifice of Abel was of more value to God than that of Cain.

Great debate exists as to why God accepted Abel's offering but not that of Cain. Some say that because Abel offered a blood sacrifice, it was a better sacrifice. But the text never makes that claim. Others argue that both offerings were acceptable based on the acceptable offerings found in Leviticus. Though true, that is, unfortunately, putting the cart before the horse.

Leviticus was written long after the time of Cain and Abel. This type of logic can result in faulty analyses of passages, and it also mixes dispensations. It's like trying to place a square peg in a round hole. Based on the account itself, it cannot actually be determined if the type of sacrifice was right or wrong.

Rather, and simply stated, Hebrews says that "by faith Abel offered to God." That is all that is necessary to determine why God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. Abel's offering was one which was accompanied by faith. The logical question is, "Did these sacrifices restore them to God or was it faith in what they symbolized that did?" Hebrews has already shown that the sacrifices and offerings of past times only look forward to Christ. Such is the case here. Abel believed in God, and he believed God. His offering to God reflected that.

In his act of faith, "he obtained witness that he was righteous." Again, this set of words confirms what was just deduced about why Abel's sacrifice was considered acceptable. The author had just said in verse 10:38 that "the just shall live by faith." His words now in Chapter 11 are given in connection with that thought, building upon it through example. Abel "obtained witness that he was righteous" because he lived in faith and made his offering based upon that faith. This is testified to by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:35, where Abel is called "righteous." In response, we read the author's next words, "God testifying of his gifts."

To understand this, think of two people who do good things. We will call one "Bill," and the other "Franklin." Bill gives billions of dollars to AIDS research, but he doesn't believe in God, nor does he make his gifts in honor of God. Franklin, however, offers himself and his time, ability, and effort in helping people in the name of Jesus Christ. He believes in Christ, he highlights Christ in his giving, and he leads people to Christ through his efforts. Which is offering in faith? And to which

will God testify of his gifts? The answer is obvious. No reward for Bill; full reward for Franklin for all deeds done in faith.

Finally, the author finishes with, “and through it he being dead still speaks.” This builds upon the thought of verse 10:2. The author said that by faith “the elders obtained a *good* testimony.” A good testimony is a favorable notion about someone. There is a favorable consideration of Abel because, through his offering of faith which is now recorded in Scripture, his actions still speak to us today.

Life application: Abel’s offering included faith whereas Cain’s didn’t. Abel’s faith resulted in what is considered a more excellent sacrifice. This led to his commendation. The lesson of Cain and Abel comes from real people that really did what was recorded. Not everything that occurred in history is in the Bible, but everything we need to know to live our lives in a manner pleasing to God is. He has left no gaps, nothing necessary has gone unrecorded, and nothing confused – or which will cause confusion in the believer’s walk before Him – is found in His word. Error in bad analysis lies with us and our failure to spend the time, reflection, and prayer needed to properly understand the context of what is written. The record on Abel stands for us today – by faith He was known as a man who pleased God. Reflect on this. The apostle Peter says that our faith is “much more precious than gold.” Have faith in God, and stand on His word at all times.

Lord God, help us to continue on in the faith we first possessed when we heard of Christ Jesus. At that moment, we believed, and we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. We were found pleasing in Your sight by simple faith. Help us to not ruin our walk now by attempting to be justified through our own righteousness, but to continue on in faith in all that we do. May our righteousness come from faith alone. Amen.

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Hebrews 11:5

The author now turns to Enoch. Very little is said of him in Scripture, and yet what is said speaks volumes. His life is recorded in Genesis 5. Other than a verse noting his birth, genealogical references in 1 Chronicles and Luke 3, and a reference to him in the book of Jude, this is all that is recorded of him –

“Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. ²² After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. ²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. ²⁴ And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” Genesis 5:21-24

The reference in Jude will note that Enoch was a prophet. It will also cite a portion of his prophecy. He is one of only two people in the Bible who never experienced physical death, the other being Elijah. With so little information on him, it is remarkable that he is recorded here in the Hall of Fame of the faithful. But despite the limited information about him, the author understood that the little said is actually of great importance. Like Melchizedek, a few words are enough to know a great deal.

And so, the author says, “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death.” The word “taken away,” simply signifies a change of place, circumstance, etc. Paul uses it in Galatians when speaking of those who turned to a different gospel. And again, the author of Hebrews used it in verse 7:12 when speaking of the change of the priesthood from Aaron to Christ. Here he notes that Enoch was so changed “by faith.” His life was a walk of faith, and in this, the Lord changed him from the state he existed to one where he would “not see death.” In this, he “was not found because God had taken him.”

What must be inferred from the verses of Genesis, but which is made explicit here in Hebrews, is that Enoch did not die. The records of Genesis 5, and elsewhere, give the birth record, any life information deemed necessary to explain the life of the man, the number of years he lived, and the record of his death. By specifically not recording the death of Enoch, Moses was – in fact – implying that Enoch did not die. The author not only agrees with the implication, but states it as a fact. And this was done for a reason. As the author says, “for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

The Hebrew says “he walked with God.” It is a way of saying that his life was one which was pleasing to Him. Because of his faithful walk, God took him so that he would not see death. However, this does not appear to be all there is concerning Enoch. Inferences can be made.

As there are two that never died, Enoch and Elijah, and as there are references to two who stand before the Lord and minister to him, it can be inferred that Enoch and Elijah are those two. A particular reference to them is found in Zechariah 4 –

Then I answered and said to him, “What *are* these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?” ¹² And I further answered and said to him, “What *are these* two olive branches that *drip* into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden *oil* drains?”

¹³ Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these *are*?”

And I said, “No, my lord.”

¹⁴ So he said, “These *are* the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.” Zechariah 4:11-14

Two who are with the Lord are also found in Daniel 12 –

“Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. ⁶ And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was*

above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” Daniel 12:5, 6

Daniel specifically records one on each side of the river. As the term “Hebrew” means “to cross over,” it appears to be a reference to one being a Jew, and the other a Gentile. Between them, above the waters, is a third. The symbolism is that of Christ being the One above the waters who unites the two (Jew and Gentile) as one. As this appears to be what is being conveyed, then it makes it clear that the gospel message in the end times tribulation period is still being called out to the whole world, Jew and Gentile. This is because the same two who were seen in Zechariah 4 are also seen in Revelation 11 –

“And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. ⁵And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.” Revelation 11:3-6

As with Melchizedek, much can be inferred from a few scattered references elsewhere in Scripture. Some of it is made explicit by the New Testament writers, other tidbits must be inferred. However, it appears that Enoch is still walking with his God, and he will be back to fulfill that walk, along with Elijah, in the days ahead.

Life application: Simply stated, Enoch had faith and his faith was pleasing to God. And so it will be for all those who are alive and have put their trust in Jesus at His coming – they will never experience physical death. The precedent for this future moment was set in Enoch and Elijah. Enoch isn’t a Hebrew and Elijah is, and yet both were taken away because they pleased God. This pattern was certainly given in part to demonstrate to us that it is not heritage, but faith, that will bring about

our eventual glorification. It is believed the world will see more of Enoch and Elijah during the tribulation period when they come to testify to the nations, but until that day Enoch is remembered by us as a true father of the faithful. May we, like him, walk with God all of our days.

O Lord, what a wonderful gift you have given us in the story of Enoch. In it, you have shown us that faith is what is pleasing to You. You have also shown us that by faith we can walk in harmony with You. Thank You for this wonderful example found in the person of our ancestor Enoch. Amen.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
Hebrews 11:6

The author now explains what he just said about Enoch. Enoch was noted as pleasing to God. How was it so? It is explained by the words which introduced him in the previous verse, “By faith Enoch.” It was “by faith.” To teach his audience how to be like Enoch, he now provides the words of this verse. “But without faith,” means “apart from faith.” The commonly used Greek word comes from a root signifying an open or detached space. Thus there is a separation between two things and, hence, “apart from.” The author says that in this state “it is impossible to please Him.”

There are several aspects of faith that are encompassed in this thought. There is faith that God exists. He cannot be seen, and yet we are expected to believe that He is as real to us as if He can be seen. Some can take the evidences of His existence, meaning the created order, and deny that God is responsible for it. Others look at what He has done (see Psalm 19:1, for example) and not only accept that God has done these things, but then extend their minds beyond them, understanding that He is even greater than His creation.

There is also faith in what God says. This, like our response to creation, requires faith. It is especially so because there are all kinds of claims concerning what “God” says. Numerous religions claim they possess the word of God. Numerous denominations claim they still receive the word of God. Countless individuals have claimed God has spoken to or through them. In each of these, there is either truth or there is falsehood, and discernment is necessary to differentiate between the two.

These things are actually of great importance because “he who comes to God must believe that He is.” This is speaking of His existence. Because we cannot see Him, there is no mental image that we can produce to say, “This is what God is like.” All there is for us is what He has done, and which is then revealed within the created order. This is what Enoch did. He accepted what he saw around him as a testimony that God exists. And because he did, he lived his life accordingly. In this, “he pleased God.”

And so Enoch’s faith in God was matched with His life which reflected that faith. Many people say they believe in God, but that belief in God doesn’t affect the way in which they live. They separate their knowledge of His existence from what that existence must be like. Enoch combined the two. He had faith in God’s existence, and he had a proper view of, and faith in, God’s attributes. With that, both of these combined into an application of His life before God and for God. The two combined into a pleasing walk of faith; a life of holiness. And how can we know this is true? Because the author next says “that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Enoch is set forth as an example of one who diligently sought out God, and therefore God rewarded him for his faithful search. He “was not found, because God had taken him.” This is what it means that Enoch lived by faith. He believed that God is, he lived his life according to his understanding of what that means, and he believed that in living in this right manner he would be rewarded. If this were not so, then there would be no reason to live in that way. In other words, a real aspect of faith in God is that He rewards faith in Him. This is why merely believing that God exists is not enough to be pleasing to God.

If a person believes God exists, but doesn't have any faith that a proper life will result in a reward or that an improper life will result in some type of punishment, then there will be no change in how that person conducts his life – “Yes, there is a God, but He doesn't care.” Or, if a person believes that God exists, but has a faulty view of what He is like, then his actions may be misdirected. A person who believes incorrectly about God may blow himself up in a shopping mall, believing that God will reward him for his actions. But he has pursued a faulty view of God. He didn't diligently pursue Him.

Theology must be properly directed to consider God as He is. Once that is understood, everything else should follow that correct ideal about God in a life which matches it.

Life application: Hebrews 11:6 is such an important verse that every Christian should not only memorize it, but use it in their daily speech to others. “...without faith it is impossible to please Him.” This single verse excludes all works based religions, and all religions outside of Christianity are in some way works-based. Therefore, either this statement is true and Christianity alone is true, or it is false and there is no assurance in all of human existence for reconciliation with God.

If one thinks it through logically though, it must be a true statement. It would contradict God's character to be any other way. Only one correct view about God is possible. God will never reward a doubter, a disbeliever, or one who has a faulty view of who He is in relation to His eternal, unchanging attributes. Therefore, this excludes religious pluralism (many paths lead to God); religious syncretism (a mixing of religious systems); and relativism (truth is changing and subjective).

God is and God has spoken. There is no change in Him, no variance, no progression, and no untruth. Therefore, He can and will only reward “those who diligently seek him.” And that diligent seeking will inevitably and only lead to Jesus Christ. Only through Jesus can we truly please God, and only in pursuing and seeking Jesus can we receive reward from God. Have faith and seek the Lord with all your heart.

Lord, give us the strong desire, and the will, to be pleasing to You and to seek You with all our hearts. Let us not trip over the simplicity of what You ask for in order to be reconciled to You – faith and faith alone. Also, may we be found pleasing because our faith is properly directed – toward Jesus! Amen.

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

Hebrews 11:7

The author now turns to Noah, and the account found in Genesis 6. He begins again with, “By faith Noah.” It is obvious from a single read through the life of Noah that he was a unique man, and a man of faith. Whereas the entire world was destroyed, he was saved. Thus, along with his seven family members, he became the new point from which the earth that is populated today stems from. In explaining how Noah lived by faith, he next says, “being divinely warned of things not yet seen.”

The word used signifies a prophetic oracle, and thus, “divinely warned,” is well rendered. One might ask, “How can it be counted as faith that Noah acted upon a divine oracle?” The question fails to take into account man’s responsibility in adhering to that divine word. A perfect example of not living by faith in what God has said in this manner is found in Numbers 20. There, Moses was told by the Lord to take his rod, go with Aaron, and speak to the rock. In doing this water would issue forth. However, instead of following the Lord’s word, it says –

“Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.” Numbers 20:11

From there, the response of the Lord came quickly –

“Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” Numbers 20:12

Moses “did not believe,” meaning “he lacked faith.” Therefore, faith is still required, even when the Lord speaks to His people. The reason this is so is because the Lord’s word pertains to things “not yet seen.” Noah had not yet seen, and yet he acted in faith. Moses had not yet seen and he failed to act in faith. In the case of Noah, he was “moved with godly fear.”

He was told by God in Genesis 6:13, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” He could have said, “What? No way. How are You going to do that?” His words would imply that what he heard was too impossible to even imagine. But instead, it says he “moved with godly fear.” He heard the word, he believed it was true, and he acted upon that same word in a manner which the world around him must have thought was insane. He built an ark.

As the author says, he “prepared an ark for the saving of his household.” The ark was immense, it took a long time to build, and it would have taken an enormous amount of time and effort. But the Lord had spoken, and Noah accepted that what the Lord said would come about. Every saw of the wood, every hammer of the nail, and every application of bitumen would have been an act of faith. This was not works leading to salvation, but faith leading to salvation. His faith preceded his works, and they were the impetus for them. And it was this faith “by which he condemned the world.”

In his faith, he built the ark. Therefore, it is in his faith that he condemned the world. This same concept will be found in the tribulation saints. In Revelation 14:13, it says –

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

It is exactly what occurred with Noah. Faith preceded works, and thus the works which follow become deeds of faith. It is not works that justify, but the faith which precedes the works. They are works of faith. Thus, the righteousness of God is “from faith to faith” (Romans 1:17). The tribulation saints will be expected to act upon the divine oracle which has been given. When they do, they are promised that they too will condemn the world. Their reward is found in Revelation 20:4.

In Noah’s condemning of the world, he “became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” Noah believed God, and God counted it to him for righteousness. It is exactly the pattern for what is said of Abraham (see Genesis 15:6). It is a righteousness not their own, but one imputed by God for faith. And this then is what is said of believers in Christ today as is recorded by Paul in Philippians 3:8, 9. It is the heart of the gospel message.

We look to Noah as a man of faith for having responded to the word of the Lord. We look to Moses in the same manner, except in the incident of Meribah. However, do we look to our own actions in this manner? The answer must be based on a single question, “Do I adhere to the word of God?” The same voice that spoke to Noah and to Moses speaks to us today through the pages of Scripture. We are either living in faith and acting upon it in accord with His instruction, or we are not. It is that simple.

Life application: Whether you believe the account of Noah is true or not is of the greatest importance in whether or not you are on sound footing in your doctrine. If you fail to accept the account of Noah as a literal occurrence, then your faith in the word of God is lacking. Likewise, if your faith in the Bible is lacking, then your knowledge of, and faith in, Jesus is lacking. If your faith in Jesus is lacking, your

faith – whatever it is – very well may be in vain. Each point of this logic is interwoven with the next. If any part of the tapestry of your faith is missing, the entire fabric falls apart. How can such a claim be made from an otherwise incredible passage of the Old Testament? Because the New Testament states the account is true. Noah is recorded in 6 separate chapters of the New Testament, including Jesus’ genealogy and by the words of Jesus Himself –

“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: ²⁷They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” Luke 17:26 - 27

If Jesus was merely accommodating the audience by quoting a story He knew was false, then He is a liar and not the Son of God. Also, as the Bible records Jesus’ words and is the only source of our faith in Jesus, then if the account of what Jesus said isn’t true, we are still following a false Lord. Faith in what the Bible says leads us to Jesus. Faith in Jesus is what leads us to the Father. Be wise and have properly placed faith.

Lord, when you put it that way... When You tell us the account of Noah really happened, I need to accept it by faith. Keep my faith strong, O Christ, even in the difficult passages of the Bible. It is evident now how important it is to accept even the stories which seem incredible. Strengthen my faith that I may be pleasing to You! Amen.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. Hebrews 11:8

The author next turns to Abraham. He is noted in twenty-seven books of the Bible, and is often used as an example of great faith. Even the Lord Jesus spoke of him

on several occasions. He has already been mentioned eight times in Hebrews, mostly in Chapter 7, but it is obvious that he is a pivotal figure in the scene of redemptive history.

Paul uses him in critical sections of his writings to explain profound theological matters, particularly because he predates the law of Moses, and thus sets an example which demonstrates that righteousness, by default, comes apart from deeds of the law. Even James, who is cited by countless scholars as supporting justification through works, actually speaks of Abraham in a unique way which – it is true – involves works, but the works are based on something entirely different than what those scholars conclude. That will be noted in the coming verses of Hebrews as well.

So far, three men prior to Abraham have been noted for their faith, Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Abraham has an interesting parallel to each of the three. Abel “offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,” whereas Abraham offered the most excellent sacrifice possible in his son Isaac (coming in verse 11:11). Enoch walked with God; Abraham walked where God directed him to walk. Noah “became the heir of righteousness” through faith, whereas Abraham became the model of righteousness by faith.

In his beginning thoughts, he says again, “By faith.” The author is ensuring that the pattern which is found pleasing to God continues on unabated. And so, “By faith Abraham obeyed.” In a manner similar to Noah, there is an obedience to the directive which has been given. Noah was told to do something incredible, and he did it. Abraham is told to do something which would lead to a life of pilgrimage, and yet he did it. He “obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.”

As a technical note, Vincent’s Word Studies shows that the thought of going out is to be construed with “obeyed.” A present participle is used which “indicates Abraham’s immediate obedience to the call: while he was yet being called.” Thus it should be translated as “when he was called obeyed to go out.” He was called, and he did not hesitate to respond as called.

The calling is recorded in Genesis 12:1. It needs to be understood that the promise of inheritance is not found there though. The translation makes it sound like the inheritance was promised at the call. But the inheritance is not noted until afterwards. Further, it is not an immediate inheritance, but one which follows in his seed –

Genesis 12:1-3 is the call to leave his country and go.

Genesis 12:4-6 is the departure and travel through the land.

Genesis 12:7 is the promise of the inheritance to his descendants.

Acts 7:5 calls attention to this order and the fact that Abraham did not personally receive the inheritance, but that it would only come upon his descendants.

With this understanding, the author continues with, “And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” Abraham wasn’t an explorer looking for adventure. Rather, he was a man with a home and family who was called to pick up and leave his land and go somewhere he had never been, and without having any specifics at all as to why until after he got there. And yet, by faith, he did as instructed.

Life application: Abraham demonstrated faith, and God was pleased with that. We too are pleasing to God when we demonstrate faith in Him. The first act of faith that we can accomplish which will please God is to believe the gospel message of Jesus Christ. After that, we can continue to please God by accepting His word as authoritative in our lives. Along with that comes faith that His word is, in fact, the authoritative word of God. Accounts such as creation, the flood, and the tower of Babel (among countless others) are written as simple statements of fact. Do we accept them in that manner? Or do we look at them as allegorical representations of other things? The answer we make really matters concerning our faith in what we consider to be the word of God. We are saved by faith in Christ, but we will be judged based upon our lives in Christ, particularly in relation to how we understand, accept, and apply God’s words in our lives. If you struggle with parts of the Bible, talk to God about it and ask Him to reveal to you what you are struggling with. That alone is an act of faith.

Thank You Lord God for the lesson of faith we find in the person of Abraham. Though we don't always know the path that lies ahead of us, we have been assured in Your word that You are with us and will guide us all our days. Grant us faith like Abraham – to step out and follow where You direct. To Your glory, and to a walk which is pleasing to You, we pray. Amen.

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; Hebrews 11:9

As noted in the previous verse, Abraham was called out of his home to a place which was unknown to him, and by faith he went. It wasn't until after his arrival that he was informed that the land would be given as an inheritance. But it was not to him directly that it would be given. Rather it was to his descendants after him. As for him, he was given "no inheritance in it, not even *enough* to set his foot on" (Acts 7:5). This is the state of things at the time which is now described by the author. He says, "By faith he dwelt in the land of promise."

It is exactly this sequence of events which brings in the meaning of "the land of promise." The Greek actually reads, "a land of the promise." It is the promise which is focused on. Whatever land was of the promise is the land which the Lord would ensure was Abraham's inheritance. Once he had arrived in Canaan, having passed through Shechem and as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh, the inheritance was then promised –

"Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.'" Genesis 12:7

This is "the promise," and it is in the promise that the land is specified. However, the last thing recorded before that promise was made were the words, "And the Canaanites *were* then in the land" (Genesis 12:6). Understanding this, the land was already possessed by a people group. Despite this, Abraham was told that his

descendants would possess it. Thus, the words, “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise,” show that Abraham believed what he was told and lived in faith of the fulfillment of that prophetic word. The land would be his (meaning his posterity) despite it already being claimed by others. Rather than disbelieve, he remained there “as *in* a foreign country.”

These words describe the words, “by faith.” Everyone who is alive has to dwell somewhere. It doesn’t take faith to keep on living. However, it takes faith to remain in a land which has been given to you, but which you do not possess, waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. During his time in Canaan, he lived without citizenship or the rights of that citizenship. Instead, he was simply a foreigner in a land which he had been promised. Therefore, Abraham was faithful to live out his life “dwelling in tents.”

As the land was not his at this time, but only by promise, he couldn’t go in and start cultivating fields, building houses, opening schools, putting up speed signs (no donkey’s over 10mph!), collecting taxes, and doing all the things that the possessor of the land would do. Rather, he had to watch the land of his inheritance benefit those who would someday be dispossessed by his descendants. All the while, he lived in tents, moved from time to time, and simply passed through time without possessing his promised possession. And this was true with his immediate family after him, both “Isaac and Jacob.”

During Abraham’s life, he waited on a son to inherit the land. By the time he was rather old, no son had come, and yet he still lived by faith. At one point, he noted to the Lord that his only inheritor was a slave, born in his house. But the Lord promised otherwise; he would have an heir from his own body. When that was slow in coming, his wife Sarah gave him her maidservant to bear a son. From her came Ishmael. But the Lord again said that he would not be the son of promise. Rather, it would be from Sarah. Eventually, Isaac was born, and from Isaac came Jacob. They were “the heirs with him of the same promise.” The Lord determined, Abraham (and subsequently Isaac and Jacob) believed, and they lived by faith in the word of the Lord.

Life application: The accounts of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob span chapters 11-49 of Genesis. Each was filled with faults and troubles. The struggles they had with their wives, children, and health are no different than ours today. Favoritism when dealing with others, deceit in relationships, and stubbornness to yield to the better path seemed to plague them. Abraham gave in to bad advice which resulted in the birth of Ishmael – something which later caused him enormous heartache. Isaac had to send his son Jacob away before his other son Esau killed him.

Jacob didn't restrain his children and ended up dealing with murder, incest, and immense heartache. It is easy to look at our lives today and think about how dysfunctional they are, but comparing them to these patriarchs shows that our situations are pretty normal after all. We may think our health problems aren't deserved or are greater than they should be, but the Bible records these men suffered from the same conditions.

Today, however, we have medical facilities we can go to. And if we are laid up at home, we have TVs, air conditioners, refrigerators full of yummy food, etc. These people "lived in tents," they had no access to the local grocery store, and they had to suffer their pains without painkillers or air-conditioned environments. When you think on the difficulties your children are giving you, remember that these men went through the same or worse.

When you think you've mismanaged your family relationships, don't forget that they messed up just as badly. And as you suffer through illness or disease, no matter how bad it is, these people suffered with the same – but in much harsher conditions. In the end, though, they are remembered for one thing above all else – they lived by faith. When your time is up, God will reward you based on your faith as well. Instead of looking at the trials, pains, and troubles as insurmountable, look at them as gifts which challenge your faith. You will be rewarded as you keep your eyes on, and faith in, Jesus.

Jesus, You know the pains of our hearts, bodies, and souls; pains which never seem to end. You know our weaknesses in facing them and how hard it is to endure each day. Be with us, strengthen us, and give us the faith to endure through each difficult moment. And may You alone be glorified as we prevail by Your might. Amen.

...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11:10

There are two articles in the Greek which are rather important in understanding the intent of the words of this verse. The KJV completely botches the translation by ignoring both of them, thus rendering the verse impotent. The NKJV includes one, but not the other. The words read, “**the** city which has **the** foundations.” With that understood, we can properly appreciate the words of the author.

Building upon the previous verse, he notes that Abraham “dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country.” He goes on to say that in that land, he dwelt in tents. The reason for this is that “he waited.” If Abraham thought of an earthly possession, he would have claimed land, built a home, and started to build his empire. But God promised that his descendants afterward would possess the land, meaning he would not. Thus, he waited. In his waiting, “he waited for the city which has foundations.”

It was understood that dwelling in tents meant that his lodging was temporary. With the pulling up of the pegs, the tent would collapse. With a strong enough wind, the tent would blow away. There was never a sense of permanence in his tent-dwelling lifestyle. The earth itself was the only foundation. But the earth is in a fallen state. It brings forth life which then eventually dies and returns to the dust.

However, there is the city which has the foundations. It is a city of life everlasting. It is what Abraham looked forward to, and it is referred to by Paul in Ephesians 2 –

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

Here Paul speaks of a holy temple, but Revelation clarifies the picture –

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Revelation 21:14

When it says in Ephesians 2 that the household of God is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, it signifies their proclamation of Christ is the foundational message. It is He who is the chief Cornerstone. In the New Jerusalem, the names of the apostles are on the twelve foundations, signifying the work of the apostles in carrying out the foundational message of Christ. In other words, the city with the foundations is speaking of nothing less than the message of Messiah, and the reality of Messiah as the focal point of our relationship with God. It was He who was promised to come and restore all things, and Abraham looked forward to that, not to an earthly inheritance.

His understanding of this was limited to the simple promise of God to Adam, as had been passed down throughout the generations, but it was a promise that was sure to come. It is this city, built upon the message of Messiah, “whose builder and maker *is* God.”

Babel was a city built by men, and by human effort. The purpose of it was the uniting of the people and to reach heaven. As it says, “Come, let us build ourselves

a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens” (Genesis 11:4). However, the Lord spurned this, dispersed the people, and rejected it as a means of restoration with Him.

In the very next chapter of the Bible, it tells of the call of Abraham and the continued work of God in building an everlasting city which would be united in purpose, in speech, and in devotion to God, all because of the work of God in Christ. This is “the city with the foundations.” It is set in contrast to anything available in tents, demonstrating Abraham’s anticipation of future glory in Messiah.

Life application: Many years later after Abraham’s call, while speaking to Pharaoh in Egypt, his grandson Jacob used the terminology of someone looking beyond the life he was living –

“The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” Genesis 47:9

A pilgrim is a person on a journey to a holy place. Jacob, like Isaac and Abraham before him, knew that this life was temporary and troubled, but these men looked forward to that city whose “builder and maker is God.” This is a really good lesson for each of us to consider. How deeply have we set our roots in this life instead of looking at it as a stepping stone for the next? Keep your eyes on the prize and don’t get sidetracked by what is only temporary and fleeting.

Lord God, You are preparing a true home for Your people, an eternal home which is the city with the foundations. It is our great hope since the time of our first father, Adam. Help us to not get so caught up in the things of this world that we forget the promise and lose sight of the goal. Help us to keep our eyes on Jesus, and to live in anticipation of the time when we are forever returned to the splendor of Your presence. Amen.

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Hebrews 11:11

There is an emphasis in the Greek which highlights the introduction of Sarah. This wording is probably intended to highlight the fact that she was, at first, unbelieving of the promise of a son. The structure in Greek, “By faith Sarah herself also,” reveals this emphasis. The account is recorded in Genesis 18 –

And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.”

(Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.) ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

¹³ And the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

¹⁵ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid.

And He said, “No, but you did laugh!” Genesis 18:10-15

Sarah lacked faith at first, but “By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed.” Though at first she was incredulous that such a thing could take place, that was eventually replaced with a strong confidence that what was stated would, in fact, come about. This demonstrates that faith itself is something that, at times, needs to be cultivated. In Sarah’s case, and after being built up in her faith, “she bore a child when she was past the age.”

She went from a state of laughing that such a thing could never happen to acceptance that it was sure to come about. Indeed, despite her age, she realized that nothing is too hard for the Lord. However, it took the account from Genesis

(above) to elicit that out of her. Once this came about, “she judged Him faithful who had promised.”

Sarah went from thinking from the perspective of the world around her, where certain things happened, and other things didn’t happen, to a perspective that the Lord was capable of causing the otherwise impossible to occur. Further, not only can He cause such things to come about, but He was faithful to follow through when He spoke out His word concerning the matter. This is the same sentiment that is seen in the previous chapter –

“Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.” Hebrews 10:23

Life application: The Lord has made certain promises that are recorded in His word. As incredulous as they may seem, they have been uttered, and they reflect the very nature of who He is. Thus, they will come about as He has spoken. However, care must be taken to interpret what the word says. The Lord does not promise health, wealth, prosperity, or long life. At times, these things are spoken of as generally coming about when one follows the Lord and His precepts, but they are not promises. Rather, they are general guidelines. And so we must know the word and understand it in its proper context. In this, we will not be led down a false path of believing that God will keep us from trials and afflictions. Quite the opposite is often true. Be sound in your doctrine, and be sure of the promises which are unconditional. All others need to be taken as grace added to the grace you have already been bestowed.

Lord, You alone have done everything necessary to provide us with righteousness – a righteousness not our own, and not of works, but of faith in You and Your promises. Help us never to forget or misuse this most important precept! And then, give us continued faith to trust that what You have done is also sufficient to carry us through to our completion. Amen.

Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.
Hebrews 11:12

The word, “Therefore,” is based upon what has been said since verse 8, and which spoke of both Abraham and Sarah. However, this now goes beyond only Abraham and Sarah, though it is still fulfilled in Abraham and Sarah together as well (see Deuteronomy 1:10, for example). The author says, based on those previous thoughts, that “from one man,” meaning Abraham, something rather amazing would come about. This begins to be seen in, “and him as good as dead.”

The words here speak of what is probably based on his relationship with Sarah, not on his inability to sire children. This is certain because when Sarah gave Abraham her maidservant Hagar, she bore with no problem. This is more certain because, after Sarah’s death, Abraham bore other children through another wife, Keturah, as well as concubines (see Genesis 25:1-4). However, before these things came to pass, it looked as if there was only a dead end to any descendants for him from Sarah. Despite this, and through Sarah (as well as those others), there “were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude.”

The Greek word is “heaven,” and it fits better here. The stars in the sky at any given time aren’t a jillionth of those in heaven. In fact, one might not see any stars in the sky depending on conditions. However, heaven is filled with them, regardless of the condition of those visible in the sky. This is what the offspring of Abraham are equated to. And then again, another superlative is used in the words, “innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.”

In the original promise of a son to be born to Abraham, a part of this same thought was conveyed –

“Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” Genesis 15:5

After Abraham was tested with sacrificing Isaac, that was expanded upon, and it is what is being referred to now by the author of Hebrews where both of the terms were used in Genesis 22 –

“By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.” Genesis 22:16, 17

Understanding these promises, it is certain that there is both a literal and a spiritual fulfillment of them. The literal fulfillment is that Abraham’s descendants of the flesh fill the world. This includes those of Sarah, her maidservant, and his later wife and concubines. But the promise also extends spiritually to those who are of the faith. This is made explicit by Paul in Galatians 3 –

“Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” Galatians 3:7

And again –

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:26-29

In both a literal sense and in a spiritual sense, the promise to Abraham, because of his faith in the word of the Lord, was exactly fulfilled.

Life application: Though literally fulfilled in physical descendants, the promise made to Abraham is also fulfilled in a spiritual sense in those who are of faith in the word of the Lord. This is not only in faithful Jews looking forward to the Messiah, but also in all – Jew and Gentile alike – who look back on the work of the Messiah. When you read about this great promise to Abraham, understand that you are included in the innumerable host of God’s children, all because of your faith in the Messiah, our Lord Jesus.

What a gift! We are children of God and sons of Abraham by faith in Jesus! What more could we ask for when we realize the magnitude of this concept. All our sins are forgiven and eternal life has been bestowed upon us by grace through faith. Glory to God for His immeasurable gift of love! Amen.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Hebrews 11:13

Speaking of those mentioned in the previous five verses, meaning Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, the author stops for a moment and notes how their life of faith ended. He states, “These all died in faith.” To grasp the full extent of this statement, one can take the definition of faith provided in verse 1 and include it as a part of the thought –

“These all died having the substance of things hoped for, and with the evidence of things not seen.” Their hope remained with them concerning the things they had not seen, but knew to be true. Their faith at their time of death was not realized in seeing what they hoped for. As the author says, “not having received the promises.”

At the fall of man, the Lord God promised One who would come to restore that which was lost. This was a hope of these people, and that hope had not yet transpired. At the call of Abraham, the promise of an inheritance was added into that. For him and his wife Sarah, and then their son Isaac, and then their grandson Jacob, that hope was not realized upon their deaths. But they knew it was to come about. These people had, in fact, received the promises but not the substance. Despite this, the author says, “but having seen them afar off were assured of them.”

Jesus takes this state of Abraham and shows how true it was with him. In John 8:56 we read –

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

Abraham saw the promise afar off, and he was assured of it. Messiah would come! The promised rest would be granted! All things would be made new! This is how each of these lived. There was the absolute assurance in their souls that God’s promises would be realized. In this, the author then says they “embraced *them*.”

Here, the NKJV (following the KJV) destroys the intent that the author is attempting to convey. The translation of “embraced,” can be inferred from the original Greek, but to translate it this way ruins the symbolism. To embrace is to hold. These people of faith saw the promises from a distance and “saluted” them, or “greeted” them, knowing they could not expect their fulfillment in this life. It is as ships passing by which can only be hailed with a salute. The only possible way of translating this “embraced” while conveying the proper intent would be to make a lengthy paraphrase, such as “embraced them in their minds,” or something to that effect. Rather than embracing them, they saluted them from afar “and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

The author was probably thinking of Abraham's words when he penned this. In Genesis 23:4, at the death of his wife Sarah, he said to the people of the land, “I *am* a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place

among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” Though promised the land as an inheritance, during his life he remained a stranger and a pilgrim. Jacob, when introduced to Pharaoh, spoke of his own pilgrimage –

“The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.” Genesis 47:9, 10

The final words of the verse, “on the earth,” could be speaking of only Canaan, as it does at times in the New Testament, but it certainly means more than this. It extends to the entire earth. Jacob claimed he was a pilgrim while in Egypt. The arena in which these people of faith lived was a proving ground for their faith in preparation for a home which they could only see from afar and greet with a hopeful, but assured, confidence that the promises would be fulfilled someday.

Life application: We all treat this life in different ways. Some, as the old saying goes, are “so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.” Some hold on to this life as if it is the only thing that can be fully trusted – even doubting the promises of Scripture beyond John 3:16. In between these two are countless variations. Some people “really want to see the Lord” but just “not today.” Some want Him to come after their child’s wedding – but anytime after that is fine. Others continue to work diligently in their jobs, but they never stop hoping for the Lord’s coming. Each moment for them is a moment of anticipation – even in the midst of life’s joys and trials.

The last is the type of person being described in this verse. He admits he is only an alien and a stranger. Temporary aliens in a foreign land continue to work, tend to life’s business, and raise families, but they always wait for a return to the land they love. This is similar to what the Jewish people would state, year after year for almost 2000 years, at their annual Passover – “Next year in Jerusalem!” Even though they were scattered around the world – even to the remotest parts – they never stopped hoping for a return to their land of promise.

Watching old footage of the joy of returnees after the long dispersion is a wonderful experience. This is what it should be like for every Christian as we wait on the Lord Jesus and the promise of the heavenly Mount Zion – the New Jerusalem. In fact, the last prayer of petition in the Bible leads us in the attitude we should hold dear, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Revelation 22:20. What is the great hope of your life? Heaven awaits, and where heaven is, there the Lord Jesus is. Yes, come Lord Jesus.

Lord God, there is nothing in this world that truly has value apart from the sure hope we possess in Christ Jesus. Without that hope, everything else is futility and chasing the wind. We heap up wealth for a future which is unknown, and certain to end in death. What is the point apart from hope in Christ? But in Him, we have the surest hope of all. Our pilgrimage here makes all the sense in the world when we anticipate what He has made available to us. Hallelujah for Jesus our Lord. Amen!

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

Hebrews 11:14

The word “For” is based upon the words of the previous verses dealing with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is they “who say such things.” This is referring to words such as being a stranger and a sojourner which Abraham declared before the sons of Heth, proclaiming the days of one’s pilgrimage (meaning being one who is on a religious quest to a place of worship) as Jacob did before Pharaoh, and other such utterances.

When people say such things, they “declare plainly.” The word means “to make manifest.” There is an intent in them which is brought forth in the very words they speak. When a Christian says, “This isn’t my home,” it is a manifestation of a desire to be taken to his “real home.” A person who believes that this is his one chance at life would never speak in such a way. Rather, he will be sure to take

every opportunity to increase his station in this life in whatever way he feels will be the most beneficial to that station.

However, when one makes it manifest that this is not their final destination, it indicates “that they seek a homeland.” Here the word is *patris*. It indicates a fatherland, and thus one’s homeland. A person may be in the foreign service, or in a company in a foreign country, for many long years. He may have a house and lots of goods accumulated during that time, but he will still speak of returning home when his service is complete. This is the idea which is spoken of here.

The walk for a believer is one which anticipates a home that he longs to return to. Even if he has never actually been there, he was there in his first father, Adam. As all humans were potentially and seminally in Adam when he was created, there is a connection back to what he experienced. For the believer, there is a desire to go where Adam had been. The child of the person in the foreign service mentioned above may have the same longing to return to his father’s country as his father had. Should the father die, the son may make an appeal to return to the land of his father. This is the idea being conveyed here. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob understood this. Faithful believers in Messiah continue to understand it today.

Life application: It really is a wonderful thing to hear a Christian say, “This ain’t my home.” This is especially so when he is receiving a reward, honor, or is just having a great day. When things are going wrong, or when life is beating you up, it is easy to wish for another home without the difficulties and trials of the moment, but when things are going right and you still can say this – wow! That is true dedication to the promises of the Lord.

When this is the heart’s desire of a faithful believer, and yet difficult times to come, their hope and faith are only increased, not shaken. On the other hand, if a person is happily content to put off the Lord’s coming for another day, then when trials come, the response may be different. Yes, their faith may be strengthened during the trial, but the pressure of the ordeal will certainly be greater than it otherwise would have been. Today, even right now, check out your faith level. Is there anything coming in life that would make you say, “I hope the Lord waits just

a little while before coming”? Other than desiring the salvation of another person, there should be nothing more anticipated than the promise of His return. This is exactly why we should be evangelizing at all times.

Keep your eyes on Jesus through the good and the bad, and look for a country of your own in the life to come.

“Oh come, let us sing to the Lord!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.” Psalm 95:1

Lord Jesus, fill our souls with a longing for You alone. May nothing ever take our eyes off of You, and may nothing ever divert our thoughts from the glory of Your majesty. How precious to us is the day that You return to take us home! And may that day be soon. Amen.

And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. Hebrews 11:15

This continues to speak of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as Sarah – “And they.” The author now makes an obvious point concerning their status as sojourners, strangers, and pilgrims by saying, “if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out.”

It was Abraham who had been called, and so the words also speak of the choice of both Isaac and Jacob – being of the same stock of Abraham – and pursuing a course that Abraham also could have pursued, as if an inherited right. The land from which Abraham was called was Ur of the Chaldeans. If these men found their status as strangers highly unappealing, they could have simply headed back to where Abraham came from. As it says, “they would have had opportunity to return.”

It was certainly a much less arduous thing to head back to Ur than it would have been to continue as strangers, bearing with that state all of the difficulties which arise as strangers, but they were looking beyond their current state to a promise which extended beyond their personal, temporary, but difficult situations. Instead, they looked to the promise which lay beyond their own years of pilgrimage.

Even more than four hundred years later, the same opportunity could have existed for the people of Israel, after having entered into and subdued Canaan. Joshua 24 leaves the possibility open for them. First, they were provided the history –

“Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. ³ Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. ⁴ To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau.’” Joshua 24:2-4

Later in the chapter, Joshua tells them that the home and station of Abraham was still open to them, but that his hope was not found in that ancestral inheritance –

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15

The obvious connection that the author of Hebrews is making is that of a life of living by faith in Christ as opposed to a return to a life of deeds under the law. He has spoken of this continuously throughout the epistle, and he is showing that those of past times chose the promise found in Messiah over the circumstances in which they existed in whichever dispensation they lived. From the beginning, and through each dispensation before Christ, people of faith anticipated the coming of the promise found in Messiah. Now, how much more should the people of God

continue to live in faithful anticipation of the promises found in the Messiah who has come!

Life application: Have you ever noticed how immigrants who can't speak a word of the native language, and who even come with nothing but the shirt on their back, often establish a business, drive around in better cars than their neighbors, and send their children to private schools – all within a short time?

Wang Chung could arrive from China, spend a few months in anxiety and sadness, and return home to a safer existence, but something inside of him is stronger than the bonds he cut when he left home. The opportunity to return is there, but the motivation for a better life in a new land is stronger than the desire to look back.

Such should be the case with every believer in Jesus. We have been called out of the world of sin and death and into His kingdom of righteousness. Instead of wallowing in the past and looking back to the previous life of whatever bound us, we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Those who had the most to gain often make the best converts. When someone leaves behind a life of drugs, alcoholism, or some other major sin, they tend to rise far above those around them who have become complacent in their salvation. They have their eyes on a better life in this world and eternal rewards in the next.

If you feel your Christian walk is floundering, look back to where you were before you met Christ. If there isn't a time that is striking and memorable, look at those whose lives were changed and emulate their positive steps. Just as the foreigner excels and receives reward based on his hard work and dedication, so the Christian will excel and receive a greater reward based on his devotion to Christ. Don't think of the country you left with a desire to return, but look to Jesus and His glory.

Lord, keep us from looking back now that our hands are on the plow. Instead, give us the heart's desire to work towards the rewards of the eternal life that we already possess in Christ, and to revel in the blessing that comes from a faithful walk with You. May our lives be a pleasing sacrifice all our days – to Your honor alone. Amen.

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

Hebrews 11:16

The author now begins a new thought concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with, “But now.” It is a contrasting thought to what he just said about the fact that if they wished to, they could have returned to the country from which they had come out. Rather than that though, “they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*.”

Instead of an inheritance in an earthly country, their hearts, minds, and future affections are set on what God has promised for man, not on what man currently has, or can, possess. Earlier in Hebrews, the author spoke of entering God's promised rest. This was to be, in type, Canaan. However, it is seen that Canaan was only typical of a spiritual reality. In Hebrews 4:3, speaking to his audience who are in various places (and who continue on in various times since the letter was written), it says, “For we who have believed do enter that rest.”

What was thought to be the obtaining of God's rest through entrance into Canaan is actually the entering of God's rest through belief in God's Son. By faith in Messiah, one enters into God's promised rest. This is what is again being relayed here. Canaan, the promised inheritance for Abraham's descendants, is only given in type and shadow of the “heavenly *country*.”

As these men lived in faith of something they did not possess, and as that thing which was promised was only typical of heaven, then the promise must stand for any who look forward to God's promises by faith as well. And so it is. This will be made explicit in the final verse of the chapter. For now though, and because of their faith in this promise, the author says, "Therefore."

It is based on these things, which have been spoken of, that he says, "God is not ashamed to be called their God." The word signifies being surnamed. The patrimony of God rests upon the individual, without any hint of shame or embarrassment by Him, because of their faith in Him and His promises. This is why God said to Moses of them in Exodus 3:6, "I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This is so clear in God's mind that "He has prepared a city for them."

There is no doubt that this is speaking of the restored paradise where God will dwell with man. It is known as "the New Jerusalem" in the book of Revelation. These men of God looked back on the story of their first father, Adam, having understood that he –

- 1) was created (Hebrews 11:3),
- 2) fell and was cursed along with the earth (as is implied in the need for an offering as seen in Hebrews 11:4), and
- 3) was assured of the promise of restoration at some point (as is implied in the translation of Enoch in Hebrews 11:5).

Each of these was understood from the early Genesis account, but they are lined up in the words of the author in a manner which reveals these truths in Hebrews. These men knew the story of these beginnings, they grasped the meaning behind them, and they looked forward in anticipation of seeing the plan come to its fruition. Thus, they walked as strangers and sojourners, awaiting the fulfillment of

the promises. A city is prepared for them, and it is available to any and all who will come by faith.

Life application: This verse tells us that our faith in, and anticipation of, a greater home – a better country than the one in which we live – is also a point which truly pleases God. When we put all of our time in the pleasures of this world even after God has promised something so much greater, we show a lack of faith in His promises. Look ahead to what God has planned and have faith that what is ahead is infinitely more wonderful than the temporary pleasures of this world.

Thank You, Lord, for the wonderful promises of a greater life to come. These are found in the same word which tells us of Jesus making access to that life possible. We believe in Jesus, but surely we are limited in our ability to see beyond our current circumstances, and so give our souls a fresh filling of Your Spirit of promise so that we can rejoice, without fear or trepidation, in the promises of the life yet to come. Amen!

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Hebrews 11:17

The author now returns to Abraham and his life of faith, once again saying, “By faith Abraham.” In verse 8, it was noted that he was called to move in order to receive an inheritance by faith. The author continued with that thought and included Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah in his words concerning what that meant. Now, still speaking of that same thought, he says, “when he was tested.”

God had promised him an inheritance. By faith, he went to the land which would be received by his descendants as such. But along the way came a test of his faith. This was not because the Lord needed to know the faithfulness of Abraham's heart, but so that Abraham might know it. Further, it was then to set an example of faithful obedience for those who would read the account and be encouraged to

emulate the same faithful obedience to the Lord. And also, the Lord used the account to then show types and pictures of what God would do in His own Son, Jesus. The type, Isaac, anticipated the Anti-type, Christ Jesus. And so it says that Abraham “offered up Isaac.”

The NKJV, following the KJV, misses the intent of what is said. The verb “offered up” is in the perfect tense. Abraham “had offered up.” The intent is to show that while the sacrifice was in the process of happening, Abraham had – for all intents and purposes – actually offered him up in his mind. To him, it was an accomplished fact (see James 2:21).

A promise of inheritance is no good if there is no one to inherit it! And yet, God asked Abraham to offer up the son who was to be the one through whom the promise would be received. As can be seen, the author has not changed the subject at all. He is continuing on with the thought of the promised inheritance. As it says, “and he who had received the promises.” This is speaking of Abraham. The actual promise is found in Genesis 21 –

“So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹ And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. ¹⁰ Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.’ ¹¹ And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son.

¹² But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.’” Genesis 21:8-12

The Lord had spoken the word that Isaac was the son of promise, and it was through him that Abraham’s seed would be called. And yet, in Genesis 22, the Lord asked Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering. Being faithfully obedient, he “offered up his only begotten *son*.”

As directed, Abraham followed the instructions of the Lord precisely. In doing so, the typology of the coming Christ was set. The Father would offer the Son, substitution for man's sins would be effected, and life through Messiah was made possible. The land of inheritance, meaning reentry into God's paradise, was realized. Canaan is a land which was (and continues to be) only typical of something greater. Abraham didn't know these things, but God did – even knowing that Abraham would be willing to do them.

Life application: Most people have heard of the account of Abraham and Isaac. It was “by faith” that Abraham was willing to offer up his son – the son of promise. In this verse, the NIV incorrectly states – “his one and only son.” Abraham had another son before Isaac named Ishmael. This error is repeated in the NIV in John 3:16 when the same terminology is used of Jesus, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...” In fact, God claimed Israel as a son long before the advent of Jesus – “Thus says the Lord: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn’” (Exodus 4:22).

This is an important point in understanding redemptive history and divine election. In both Isaac and Jesus, they were the “only begotten” sons of promise, not the claimed “firstborn” sons, and thus we have the resulting concept of divine election. For a list of other “replacement seconds” of note in the Bible, one can refer to this link: <http://www.wonderful1.com/page17.html>.

In addition to the second replacing the first, there is another wonderful parallel of Abraham/Isaac and God the Father/God the Son. Abraham had his son Isaac carry the wood on his back up the hill just as the Jesus carried the cross up to Calvary. The father was to perform the sacrifice, just as the Father allowed the great, final sacrifice. Both occurred in the same location as is indicated in Genesis 22:14, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for the sacrifice.” and this is what happened in Christ – the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sins of the whole world in the same place about 1900 years later. Truly, on the mountain of the Lord, God provided. Thank God for Jesus Christ our Lord. To watch the sermon, go to this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlFD9BEoO3c>

Lord, thank you for the wonderful truths which are plainly evident through a study of Your word. Just as the first man, Adam, brought condemnation on all men, so faith in the second Man, Jesus, brings salvation to all who call on Him. Your word is perfect in all it teaches us. Thank You for the treasures it contains! Amen.

...of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” Hebrews 11:18

The author now cites Scripture to support his previous statement. Taken together, the two verses read –

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’”

The translation here leaves a question concerning the words, “of whom.” Does this mean, “in regards to whom,” meaning Isaac, or “to whom,” and thus meaning Abraham. The answer is, “To whom,” and it should be translated that way. It is referring to Abraham (it is terminology used in the same manner as in Luke 19:9). This is cleared up by the actual citation from Genesis 21:12 –

“But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.’”

God made the promise to Abraham concerning the calling of his seed through Isaac. The importance of these words concerning Isaac are realized in the meaning of the phrase “shall be called.” The word *qara*, or “call,” at times carries with it the sense of “to be.” When God created the light in Genesis 1, it says, “God called the light Day.” He named the light Day, and from that time on it has been this way. It is a verbal state of being – the light equates to Day.

Therefore, when God said to Abraham, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” it is stating that the existence of Abraham’s seed will be reckoned through Isaac. And yet, in the very next chapter, before Isaac had borne any children, the Lord directed Abraham to offer Isaac up as a burnt offering. Despite this lack of descendants from the one upon whom the calling was named, Abraham followed through with his instruction. It demonstrates the highest faith to have done so.

Life application: It is worth comparing the accounts of Abraham’s faithfulness as recorded in the Bible to that in the Koran. It is claimed by adherents to Islam that it was Ishmael, not Isaac, who was the child by which Abraham was tested –

“We called him: ‘O Abraham.’ ‘You have believed the dream.’ We thus reward the righteous. That was an exacting test indeed. We ransomed (Ismail) by substituting an animal sacrifice. And we preserved his history for subsequent generations. Peace be upon Abraham. We thus reward the righteous. He is one of our believing servants.” Sura 37:104-111

First, notice that the name “Ismail” is surrounded by parenthesis. This indicates that the translator chose to insert the name as no name is mentioned in the Koran. Both books, therefore, indicate that Abraham was tested; however, only the Bible records the name of the son – Isaac. Further, the Koran acknowledges elsewhere that Isaac was the son of promise; a fact agreed upon by both faiths. The Bible’s complete and thorough use of the pattern whereby the first is replaced by the second is confirmed in the Ishmael/Isaac account. Finally, the biblical account predates that of the Koran by over 2000 years and the oldest documents still in existence actually predate the Koran by over 800 years. The Bible proves itself historically, scientifically, anthropologically, and prophetically concerning the nature of God, and in a host of other ways. The Koran fails in all of these. If you are one of the religious pluralists of the world who believe “all paths lead to God,” you need to study these matters and think them through. Jesus makes absolute claims and these are absolutely exclusive in nature. Make the right choice today. Choose Jesus.

Lord, as truth is immutable, and as Your word claims to be truth, please give us understanding in it as we read it. And also, give us faith to accept it as Your inspired word. Help us not to be sidetracked by false systems of belief which can only take our eyes off of You. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

...concluding that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. Hebrews 11:19

This is speaking of the subject of the past two verses, Abraham's sacrificing of Isaac. Abraham had been given the promises of an inheritance of the land, and that it would come through Isaac. And yet, God asked Abraham to offer Isaac up as a burnt offering. How could the two be reconciled? If Isaac was offered up, there would be no descendant through Isaac to fulfill the promise that a descendant would come through him. Abraham's faith had to be tested immensely. But it had to be a very grounded faith in the capability of God, in order for both events to be true.

He had to understand the nature of God; that He cannot lie. And he had to understand that God could do the otherwise seemingly impossible. Thus, in his mind, he concluded "that God was able to raise *him* up."

It is the only reasonable explanation for the two, seemingly contradictory, thoughts. If God has promised a son of inheritance through Isaac, and God cannot lie, then a son of inheritance **MUST** come through Isaac. And so Abraham went forward, in faith, to offer Isaac up. He logically concluded that God would raise him up, "even from the dead."

Abraham may have known the story of Adam. In fact, it is probable that he did. Adam was taken from the dust of the earth, fashioned into a man, the breath of life was breathed into him, and he became a living being. He may also have been aware of the life of Enoch – that he was translated without ever dying. And he

certainly knew the story of the flood. Noah was still alive after the birth of Abraham. Moreover, Noah's son Shem, who was on the ark with Noah, was alive during the entire duration of Abraham's life. He may have personally known him and talked with him. Therefore, he was certainly aware of the fact that God could do pretty much anything, and he was aware that when God spoke, no matter how incredible the words seemed, they were to be trusted.

And so Abraham put two and two together, coming up with four. He offered his son, logically and rationally understanding that he would receive his son from the dead, "from which he also received him in a figurative sense." The meaning of this is that Abraham really and truly offered Isaac. The knife was raised, and in his mind, the sacrifice was already complete – but for the words which called forth –

"Abraham, Abraham!"

So he said, "Here I am."

¹² And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Genesis 22:11, 12

In his mind, Isaac was already dead, but he received him back as alive. The picture of the coming Christ was made, and the typology was set. In his mind, Isaac was – in fact – raised to life. The word translated as "figuratively" is *parabole*. It was used in Hebrews 9:9 and this is its last occurrence in the Bible. It is the same word used forty-eight times in the synoptic gospels which is translated as "parable." The events of the Old Testament are parables of things that would be realized in reality in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Isaac became a familiar analogy for the world to grasp when Christ would become the true Son of sacrifice.

Life application: Why was Abraham willing to offer his only begotten son, Isaac, as a burnt offering to the Lord? The answer depends on what you believe about the character of Abraham, about God's sovereignty, and about the purpose of faith. During an interview I conducted of an elderly Jewish man for a college paper, the

man said that what Abraham did was inexcusable, was not really what God intended, and resulted in his separation from Sarah his wife (though the Bible never claims this).

This was the stand in the synagogue he attended, and it is a view which permeates their thought to this day. This is because to believe that Abraham's actions were as God intended then points directly to the work of God in Messiah that they have rejected. But what Abraham did was based on his obedient character, on faith in God's promises, and on the absolute sovereignty of God. Abraham believed God and God was pleased with him because of his faith.

In the case of the account of Issac, this sound belief was that God could raise the dead. Ultimately this was proven in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And, it will again be proven at the rapture of the church. But Abraham had no inclination of either of these occurrences. Rather, he understood that God had created, that all life is held in the hands of God, and that God has infinite ability to control His creation. Because of these things, Abraham faithfully took his son to Mt. Moriah, laid him on the altar of sacrifice, and raised his knife in preparation... But God called out.

It wasn't until 1900 years later that the greater sacrifice, one which was not stopped, happened there on that same mount. The ultimate sacrifice of Jesus demonstrated the infinite holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, grace, truth, and love of God for the sons of Adam.

Heavenly Father, it is hard for us to even comprehend that You didn't spare Your own Son – and for beings such as us. Our hearts are stained with sin and wickedness, and yet You gave Christ for us! May we never fail to proclaim the glorious majesty of Your splendor. May we never fail to look to the cross in complete awe and wonder. All glory surely belongs to You alone. Amen.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. Hebrews 11:20

The author now moves to Abraham's son of promise, Isaac. He completely skips over Ishmael as irrelevant to the continued history of the redemptive narrative. Though mentioned four times in Hebrews 11, this is the one instance of Isaac's life which is selected for mention in the Hall of Fame of Faith. Again, as before, he says, "By faith..."

What will be described is considered an act of faith because Isaac knew he was the son of promise. The words he was to pronounce were thus a divine oracle, and he was certain they would come out as prophesied. In his faith, "Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau."

In another example of divine election, the words place Jacob ahead of Esau even though Esau was the firstborn of Isaac. This selection wasn't something that occurred later during their lifetimes and which should have surprised Isaac. Rather, when the twins were jostling in her womb, their mother Rachael was so disturbed that she inquired of the Lord about it. She asked, "If *all is well, why am I like this?*" And the divine response –

"Two nations *are* in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger." Genesis 25:23

Before either child was born, the Lord had already divinely elected Jacob over Esau. God's sovereign choice continued through their descendants which became "two nations." In Malachi 1:2, 3 the Bible records –

"I have loved you," says the Lord.
"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'
Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"

Says the Lord.

“Yet Jacob I have loved;

³ But Esau I have hated,

And laid waste his mountains and his heritage

For the jackals of the wilderness.”

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 9:13 when discussing God’s sovereignty. In relation to that choice of God, Isaac’s blessings came upon his sons when they were seventy-seven years old, and the words have borne the truths revealed in them for thousands of years. The two blessings are found in Genesis 27, and they reveal matters “concerning things to come.”

The prophecies laid out the future destinies of the two sons, and they also pointed to truths found in redemptive history in regards to the coming Messiah. Isaac knew this and when confronted about the blessing upon Jacob by Esau, his response in Genesis 27:37 was, “Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?”

Isaac spoke, in faith, of the surety of the outcome of the blessing, and thus he is rewarded by God – and noted here in faith’s great Hall of Fame – for his faith. Though he was old, and his eyes were so dim at that time that he could not see, he still had absolute clarity of spiritual sight in regards to these matters. He could see into the future, based upon the spoken words, and know with surety that they would come to pass.

It is for this reason that Isaac, once again, blessed Jacob before he departed to Padam Aram in order to find a bride –

“May God Almighty bless you,

And make you fruitful and multiply you,

That you may be an assembly of peoples;

⁴ And give you the blessing of Abraham,

To you and your descendants with you,
That you may inherit the land
In which you are a stranger,
Which God gave to Abraham.” Genesis 28:3, 4

Isaac understood that his first blessings upon Jacob and Esau would come true, and thus his second blessing upon Jacob clearly granted Jacob the continued promise of Abraham. Isaac was a man of faith, and he acted upon that faith, trusting that God’s ways were right and proper.

Life application: Life seems unfair at times. People are born into different situations as determined by God, and rather than being unhappy about it, we need to accept our situation and work within the parameters of our station to bring the most glory to the Creator who placed us where we are for His purposes. This doesn’t mean we have to accept our plight and wallow in it without trying to better ourselves, but it does mean that whatever our station is, we should be content in it, even as we look to better it.

O God, we often wonder why we were placed where we are. Help us, Lord, to bring glory to You by being the most faithful Christians that we can be – using the time, place, and circumstances You have dealt to us in lives which are worthy of the title of “Christian.” To Your honor and glory alone! Amen.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. Hebrews 11:21

The author now turns from Isaac to Isaac’s own son of promise, Jacob by stating, “By faith Jacob.” The author then looks to two defining moments in the life of the man. The life of Jacob spans Genesis 25-49, and it was a life which filled the pages of Scripture with countless exciting details. And yet, once again, the author focuses first on the act of blessing his progeny.

When Jacob was very old and sick, Joseph came to his bedside with his own two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. With Joseph at his side, and while dying, Jacob “blessed each of the sons of Joseph.” The account, found in Genesis 48, records very specific wording and actions in order to make a point about redemptive history. Jacob knowingly placed the younger son, Ephraim, above the elder, Manasseh. He did this understanding that Ephraim would grow to become, as he said, “a multitude of nations.”

Like his father, he spoke the blessing with the surety that it would come to pass, exactly as spoken; and thus, this most significant act is recorded here in Hebrews. Along with that, a second moment of faith is also recorded about his life. It is that he “worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.”

This actually occurred prior to the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, in Genesis 47:31. The reason for having the two accounts chronologically backward is probably to first tie the blessing by Isaac of the previous verse in Hebrews in with the blessing by Jacob here. With that connection made, it then goes back in time to Genesis 47. The words here in Hebrews are a direct quote of the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Hebrew reads, “So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.”

The difference between the Hebrew word for “bed,” which is *mittah*, and “staff,” which is *matteh*, is only a few vowel points which didn’t exist when the Bible was written. They were added later to help in pronunciation, word clarity, and comprehension.

The Greek is surely what is correct here. When the Hebrew scribes who inserted the vowel points did so, they probably indicated “bed” rather than “staff” to keep Jacob from looking as if he were using the staff as an idol. But if he were an old and feeble man, he would worship leaning on his staff simply to stay up. Either way, what is implied is that Jacob was thanking and praising God for what had occurred in the previous verses of that passage which concerned Joseph’s vow to Jacob to have his body interred in Canaan rather than Egypt. But more specifically,

he asked to be buried in the burial place of his fathers which is a specific cave bought by Abraham.

The purchase of that cave is recorded in Genesis 23. Instead of being buried with his beloved Rachel, he asked to be buried there instead. It was a significant spot which looked forward to the resurrection of the righteous. It is to this location that he asked for his remains to be interred.

Thus, he is noted – in both of these instances – for faithfully looking forward to the promises of God and the growth of God’s people, far into the future. Such acts are demonstrations of great faith.

Life application: As has been seen several times already, the doctrine of divine election is noted in this verse. Jacob’s blessing on Ephraim was a movement of the Holy Spirit which again directs the reader to an important truth in God’s redemptive plan for all of mankind. Jacob said that Ephraim would become *melo ha’goyim* or, literally, “a fullness of the Gentiles.” Understanding this passage led Paul to write his analysis of the Jewish/Gentile situation as is recorded in Romans 9-11. By God’s foreknowledge, Israel would reject their Messiah which would open the door to the Gentile-led church age. Ephraim, used as a synonym for the fullness of the Gentiles, would come to Christ through faith in His glorious work. In Romans 9:25, 26, Paul quotes the prophet Hosea to help us understand this mystery –

“I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved.”

²⁶ “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,
‘You *are* not My people,’
There they shall be called sons of the living God.”

If you struggle with the thought of your salvation, for whatever reason, understand that it was something that God had known would occur all along. The fact that Jacob’s blessing, which occurred thousands of years ago, would point to the Gentiles being brought into His redemptive plans shows that God knew and

purposed that you would be a part of His salvation found in Christ. Instead of fretting over your state of salvation, be grateful for it, and know that because of God in Christ, you are made acceptable to our heavenly Father.

O Lord! Although Your word can often seem difficult to grasp, one thing is easy to understand – faith in Jesus equates to eternal salvation. Because of Your great love for the people of the world, You have given us the right to be called sons of the living God. All we can do in response is to shout praises to our mighty Lord! Amen.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. Hebrews 11:22

The author now turns from Jacob to Joseph, the beloved first son of his favored wife Rachel. He says, “By faith Joseph.” The whole recorded life of Joseph is one which is filled with amazing stories and faithful conduct. But of all of the things recorded of him which the author considered, the one he decided was most worthy of note was “when he was dying.”

The word gives the sense of “drawing to an end.” Joseph knew that his days were coming to a close, and yet he gave specific instructions to his brothers. The words are recorded in Genesis 50 –

“And Joseph said to his brethren, ‘I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’²⁵ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’” Genesis 50:24, 25

In these words to his brothers, he “made mention of the departure of the children of Israel.” The word in Greek is “exodus.” It signifies a going out, or an exit. It is only found here and in Luke 9 and 2 Peter 1. The other two instances speak of the

“departure” in leaving this body, meaning dying. In Luke, it refers to Jesus, and in 2 Peter, the apostle speaks of his own departure which was prophesied by Jesus.

Here we have one who is drawing to an end, and thus ready to depart his body, but who speaks of the departure of Israel from Egypt. This was promised to his fathers before they ever entered into Egypt, and Joseph believed that it would be the case. Further, when Jacob had come down to Egypt, he made a promise to Joseph based on that assurance of departure –

“Then Israel said to Joseph, ‘Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. ²²Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.’” Genesis 48:21

Even though Joseph was set to die in Egypt, he had faith in the word of the Lord that the past promise would someday come about. Because of this, he “gave instructions concerning his bones.”

Joseph was the second ruler in Egypt, and it was, therefore, appropriate that he should be buried among those he led, but he also desired that his final internment would not be in Egypt, but in Canaan. Having total faith that Israel would depart, he made his brothers give an oath that his remains would go out with them. The beginning of the promise was fulfilled, as is recorded in Exodus 13 –

“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.’” Exodus 13:19

The promise was completed some years later as is recorded in Joshua 24:32 –

“The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.”

Life application: Of all of the amazing things which Joseph did in his life from which the author could choose as an example of faith, this example of faith in a future he would not participate in while alive was selected. This should give us an indication as to what is also a demonstration of faithfulness in our lives – looking forward to the as yet unfulfilled promises of God and to the “better country” He has prepared for us.

As directed, in Exodus 13:19, Moses and the children of Israel took Joseph’s bones with them when they departed the land of Egypt. Joshua 24:32 records the burial of these bones in Shechem, in the land Jacob promised Joseph and as Joseph had instructed. These events occurred several hundred years apart, but what may seem slow by our standards in coming to fulfillment doesn’t mean it won’t happen exactly as God has promised. Remember this lesson as you patiently wait on the promises of the Lord. He will carry His people to their promised inheritance.

Lord, it is hard to wait on what we desire. We are earthly and constrained by time and decay. Because of this, we ask that You grant us Your Spirit of patience and control – even during the moments where nothing seems to occur as we would like. Thank You for granting us Your peace. Amen.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he* was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. Hebrews 11:23

The author now moves to Moses. He will be mentioned directly or indirectly in more verses in Hebrews 11 than any other figure. And, as usual, the author begins with, "By faith Moses." However, this first noted act of faith is not directly by Moses, but by his parents. This is noted in the words, "when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents."

The parents of Moses were Amram and Jochebed. In the last verse of the first chapter of Exodus, it says –

"So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.'" Exodus 1:22

This is followed immediately by these verses from Exodus chapter 2 –

"And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi. ² So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he *was* a beautiful *child*, she hid him three months. ³ But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river's bank. ⁴ And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. Exodus 2:1-4

The account in Exodus ascribes the act of hiding Moses to the mother. And this would have been mostly her doing. The father would work and be concerned with the greater affairs of the household. The mother would be the one to accomplish the majority of the duty of hiding the newborn. But the father would not be unaware of the act, and he would bear moral responsibility for it. Therefore, both are mentioned here. And this is because "they saw *he* was a beautiful child."

The Greek word is *asteios*, and it is only found here and in Acts 7:20 where it also speaks of the beauty of Moses. The word comes from *astu*, a city. And so this word literally means, “belonging to the city.” This is because a city is considered a place of polished manners and living. Thus, one could paraphrase this word as “he was a city dweller,” and the sense may be brought out.

Because of the elegant nature of the child, the parents were all the more emboldened, “and they were not afraid of the king’s command.” The two aspects, that of the beauty of the child, and their not caring about obeying an immoral command, combined into their determination to hide the child. It is ascribed to them as an act of faith.

Life application: Keeping the child would have resulted in death if they were caught, but by disobeying the edict for these three months they gave the baby a fighting chance – no matter how small – compared to that of a newborn. As Peter says in the book of Acts, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Even after placing the child in the basket, they had Moses’ sister watch out for him until he was found and adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter. This account should remind us that God is working out all things for His purposes. Even when we don’t understand the sorrows or troubles we are facing, He does. Nothing you are facing is beyond God’s knowledge or is outside of His plans and purposes. Have faith, just as Amram and Jochebed did, even in the face of great hardship.

Lord, give us the ability to trust that the sadness, loss, hardship, and uncertainty we face really do serve a higher and more glorious purpose. As hard as it is, help us to never grumble against Your perfect plan which is being worked out through us, Your children, through faith in Christ. Amen.

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Hebrews 11:24

The author now turns directly to Moses. Whereas the previous verse spoke of Moses only in relation to his parents, the faith of Moses himself is now highlighted. The author notes the account of Exodus 2:11, where he cites the Greek translation of that passage saying, "when he became of age." The entire verse says –

"Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren."

This is then followed up by the author with the thought that he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." The text implies this in the next verse of Exodus 2, which says that "...he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (Exodus 2:12).

By aligning himself with the Hebrew people, he disassociated himself from his adopted family. He understood that he was, and would always be, a Hebrew. Though it would be many years later before he was truly aligned with them in a way which would benefit them, this first recorded act on his part demonstrated that his natural inclination was to be identified with the Hebrew people. The author will explain what this means concerning Moses the man in the verses ahead.

Life application: It is important to be careful not to let movies or written stories over-influence our notion of biblical characters. Very little is said of Moses' adopted mother or him during his youth. If you read Exodus 2:5-10, that's all you'll get about her and his early life from the Old Testament. The very next verse (verse 11) occurs when he is forty years old. The only other thing that we can determine from the Bible about the intervening years is recorded in Acts 7:20-22 during Stephen's speech –

“At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father’s house for three months. ²¹ But when he was set out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. ²² And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.”

Unfortunately, because of movies like The Ten Commandments, people mix story information with the Bible. This verse in Hebrews gives us an insight into Moses and his character not otherwise revealed elsewhere in the Bible, and which probably came from a source similar to that spoken by Stephen in Acts 7. This may have been an oral or a written tradition, but as it was written by an apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can be certain of its accuracy. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus records quite a bit of extra-biblical information on Moses which is interesting, but should that not be held as authoritative. All of the writings of Josephus can be found online by a simple internet search. Enjoy your studies, but be careful to remember what is, and what is not, Scripture.

Lord God, how wonderful it is to read and know your word! Thank you that what the Bible records is useful for our instruction, our edification, and our contemplation. Thank you also for telling us about the faithful believers of the past. By reading about their lives, we can be built up in our faith as well. Thank You for having provided us so much in Your word to guide our steps. Amen.

...choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, Hebrews 11:25

The words continue from the previous verse, and are speaking of Moses who “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” The author notes that instead of this, he chose “rather to suffer affliction.” The word rendered as “choosing” by the NKJV is an aorist verb. It is better rendered as “having chosen,” or “chose.” He made the decision, and it was final, not ongoing. Moses determined that suffering affliction was preferable to living in luxury in Egypt. And why, because it was “with the people of God.”

If the people of God are the bearers of the promise, then what would be the point of a temporary life of luxury and ease? Moses looked past this life and made his decision. This fully explains the “By faith” which introduced this thought. Looking at the definition of faith as provided in verse 11:1, we can be reminded of this –

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Moses, understanding that the Hebrew people are the people of God, then concluded that their temporary plight (as great and burdensome as it was) was working out a much greater glory in the plan of redemption set out by God so long ago. This is exactly what faith is – an anticipation of something hoped for, but not yet realized. How easy it would be if we could see the glorious riches of heaven and work our way up to them, proving ourselves worthy along the way. But the message of the Bible is that none are worthy apart from Christ (see the next verse of Hebrews to understand this more fully), and therefore, we must live by faith in something described in only minimal – but marvelous – detail.

In suffering affliction with God’s people, Moses rejected the enjoyment of “the passing pleasures of sin.” How easy it is to enjoy the things of this world! And indeed, the more enjoyable they are, the more they tend to rank on the high side of the “sin scale.” This is because sin is an enticement for us to feel comfortable in this fallen world, apart from God. But God calls for holiness, and for a separation unto Him. This is because what is promised exceedingly outshines the greatest temptations of this life, but we can only accept this by faith.

Further, the things of this world, including all of its sinful enticements, are “passing.” They are temporary and will be gone someday. There will be nothing left of them, and the joyful hope we put in them will suddenly be ended. However, the things of God and the promises He gives are “eternal.” If we can, by faith, accept this, then we are truly in the sweet spot. We do not have sight. And this is what we, along with the ancients, will be rewarded for. The thought of this verse is somewhat mirrored by 2 Corinthians 4 –

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Life application: As we have seen, Moses was adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter and was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Had he wanted, he could have lived a life of leisure and prosperity, and yet he chose a seemingly less enjoyable path, being mistreated along with God’s people. Although the Bible doesn’t specifically tell us what prompted this, we can infer where he obtained these values. In Exodus 2, we learned that when Moses was placed in the river, his sister stood at some distance waiting to see what would happen. When he was found we read the following –

Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?”

⁸ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the maiden went and called the child’s mother. ⁹ Then Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give *you* your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. Exodus 2:7-9

Moses was still raised by his own mother for a certain period, but it was paid for at the expense of Egypt! In those early years, until he was old enough for adoption, he was most likely told about the one true God. This early training in monotheism certainly stayed with him all his life. The lesson each parent should take to heart is that even if the child strays at one time or another, if the foundation was properly laid, eventually the stability of that early instruction will outlast the temporary structures that were built on it. If you are struggling with a child who once accepted Christ and later strayed, join the club...it’s a big one. In the end, keep praying to God, and that restoration and a return to the foundation will hopefully come about.

Lord, you know the struggles and trials we as parents face. You know how it hurts us to see our children wander from the truth. But Your word gives us hope through those days of sadness, because in such days is our anticipation that they will return to the solid foundation of a close walk with You. This is a great hope and comfort to our weary souls. Amen.

...esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. Hebrews 11:26

The author now builds upon the previous words concerning Moses' refusal to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Taking this verse with the previous verse, and with that thought in mind, it says –

“choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

In this verse, the author notes Moses' “esteeming the reproach of Christ.” There are several major views on what this means. The first is that Moses understood that the promise of restoration made in Genesis 3:15 was to come through the Hebrew people. With this knowledge, he chose to suffer affliction with them, esteeming the reproach of Christ.

Another view is that he simply suffered the types of sufferings that Christ suffered. In this, he would be a picture of Christ to come, but without any purposeful intent on his part.

A third option is that the author of Hebrews is using this wording in relation to the general sufferings that were expected in the course of exercising one's faith. As Christ is the epitome of any such example, the term, “the reproach of Christ,” is

simply an idiomatic expression which conveys the meaning for any and all who suffer because of their faith.

The only option which matches the intent of the passage is the first. Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction.” The author has selected words which demonstrate that Moses made intentional choices with an end view in mind. It was because of who the Hebrew people were, and his understanding of their role, that he willingly made his choice. This is made clear in Exodus 2:11 where it says, “And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.”

In his response to this, he killed the Egyptian, rejecting his adopted status because he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” As an adopted Egyptian, he could have joined in pounding on the Hebrew, laughing it off as an exercise in fun, and then gone home to his treasures. But, in having known about the promise, he looked forward to the promise instead.

This is all the more certain, because the Greek includes an article which is unfortunately disregarded by both the KJV and the NKJV. It does not say, “the reproach of Christ,” but rather, “the reproach of the Christ.” It is not a general statement concerning a shadowy representation of Moses and Jesus, but a definite anticipation of the Christ to come. Moses knew Christ was promised, he looked forward to that promise, and instead of being content with the earthly treasures he already possessed, “he looked to the reward.”

Moses understood that the anticipation of Messiah was man’s highest goal. Nothing else in this life compares to what is anticipated in the promise of Messiah. It must be so because the promise was made at the very fall of man. If a promise has been made for something, until the promise is fulfilled, it is the highest anticipation of anything which comes in that same category.

For example, if one enjoys soda and is given all of the types of soda on earth to drink, and he is given a promise of the best soda coming at some future point, then that is the highest anticipation. All the other sodas will be enjoyed only with a view to the best which is yet to come, because they cannot compare to the promised beverage of delight.

In the promise of Messiah, coming right at the fall of man, it is thus implicitly a promise which exceeds anything since the fall of man. In His coming is the promise of all things better than that which exists prior to His coming. And in His coming, the highest benefits of all will be realized. Moses “looked to the reward” of Messiah, and he forsook the temporary, earthly, and wholly deficient treasures which could never satisfy.

Life application: What are you willing to give up for Christ? What challenge is too great? What loss is unacceptable? Jesus said it as clearly as is possible –

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matthew 16:26

Outside of Christ, there is no other ticket, no other avenue, no other payment for the soul. Moses, although not fully understanding the mystery of Christ, knew enough to accept disgrace for His sake. He knew there was a reward for his faith and his faithfulness. And so he stepped away from the riches of Egypt, which are no riches at all, and into the true wealth of his Creator.

If you have accepted Christ, what are you willing to give up that He may be glorified? People are dying in foreign lands without ever hearing of Jesus. A thousand languages on earth still don't have a single verse of Scripture in their own language. People are walking by churches without ever being invited in to hear the good news. When you go out today, think on the “walking dead” you encounter and have compassion. Eternity is a long time. The soul without Christ is an unimaginable horror. In all you do, leave the comfort of your riches and look forward to the life which is truly life. As Paul so beautifully said it –

“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...” Philippians 3:7, 8

Jesus, You have given us the examples of faith which are pleasing to You. Included in these is that of Moses. He walked away from the greatest wealth the world had to offer. But that was no wealth at all compared to the surpassing wealth of sharing in You. May we be so moved to follow You wherever we are led! Amen.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Hebrews 11:27

The account continues with Moses, but it contains a thought which seems contradictory to the Exodus account. The author proclaims, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.” Is this to be tied in with the previous thought of verses 24-26, or is it to be taken with the next thought concerning the Passover.

- 1) If it is connected to his first departure from Egypt to Midian, then it contradicts the account as recorded. The words of Exodus 2 read, “So Moses feared and said, ‘Surely this thing is known!’ ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well” (Exodus 2:14, 15). The record stands that “he feared.”
- 2) If it is connected to the Passover, then it is out of order because the Passover preceded the Exodus.

The answer is that during his time away from Egypt, Moses encountered the Lord, was established in his faith, and was encouraged by the promise of the presence and assistance of his brother Aaron. These things are recorded in Exodus 3 & 4 and in Exodus 4:29-31, where Moses came to the elders of the children of Israel and showed them the signs the Lord had given him to bring about their release. In Exodus 5:1, it then says, ““Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.”””

Moses had grown in his courage and no longer feared the wrath of the king. In his return to Egypt, he as the acknowledged representative of Israel, forsook Egypt. He was spiritually prepared for the challenge ahead as the plagues of Egypt led to the time of Israel’s release from their bondage.

This is why the next two verses, which will still refer to Moses, speak first of the keeping of the Passover, but also say that “he kept the Passover” in the singular, even though all of Israel kept it, and then it says, “they passed through the Red Sea,” in the plural. Moses stood as representative of Israel, and Israel was led by Moses. Thus what he forsook, Israel also forsook. And both did so “not fearing the wrath of the king.” And this was because “he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

These words confirm that the first clause is speaking not of his exile to Midian, but of his time of endurance while facing Pharaoh. Moses never saw God in the burning bush. The flames simply made His presence known. He heard the voice, and he continued to hear the voice direct him throughout his time prior to the people’s exodus; and he endured, understanding that the voice which instructed him was as sure as if seeing Him.

Life application: It was by faith that Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible. What an incredible statement! It has been said, “What is more foolish, a man who believes in a God he cannot see, or a man who is angry about a God he doesn’t believe in.” Moses had never actually seen God. Instead, he had seen a burning bush which spoke to him, but the bush actually hid the glory of God. It was a

visible manifestation provided for Moses' sake. In the end, though, it was faith in a God he couldn't see that gave him the strength and fortitude to not fear Pharaoh. Such is the case with each believer in Christ. We can't "see" God anymore today than Moses did then. And Jesus has ascended to the Father so that we cannot now see Him either. But what did He say to His disciples –

Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29

All we have is the Bible to tell us of Jesus. When we accept Him, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, whom we also can't see. Therefore, we are living by faith and not by sight. Our hope and trust is in the One who can make the invisible visible, the unknowable knowable, who unites the infinite with the finite. Because of Jesus, we can have fellowship where it once didn't exist and we can have peace in place of anxiety. If you are facing troubles because of your Christian walk – whether in the workplace, with family members, or in any other way – then remember Moses' example. By faith, he saw Him who was invisible and was found pleasing to God because of that faith. Be strong and unwavering in your convictions about the Person and work of Jesus.

Lord Jesus, give us wisdom to follow You and to trust Your word as the rule and guide of our lives. Give us faith to not fear those who persecute us because of our love and devotion to You. And Lord, we look forward with anticipation to that day when our faith will become sight – when we see the beauty of Your majesty in person. What a happy day that will be! Amen.

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. Hebrews 11:28

Still speaking of the faith of Moses, the author again states, "By faith." What will be described was obviously an act of faith. It was something which was stated

would occur, and the consequences for not doing as instructed would be fatal for the firstborn sons in the land. It is “By faith that he kept the Passover.”

The Greek more precisely reads, “By faith he instituted the Passover.” Moses did not keep a Passover that was already observed from time past. Rather, he observed it for the first time, bringing it forth from that time forward. The Greek is in the perfect tense, signifying the completion of the act in the original Passover, and the continued significance of that observance, even down to the time of the author’s writing of the epistle. The author continues on with “and the sprinkling of the blood.”

This speaks of the application of the blood on the doorposts and lintel of each of the houses in Egypt. This was never done again after the first observance, showing the completed nature of the Passover, despite it having on-going observances in the future. The first Passover alone set the type for the coming of Christ, and all other annual observances looked forward to the fulfillment anticipated by that first Passover. This is also true with the final clause, “lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.”

Again, the Greek reads differently than this. A closer translation would be, “lest the destroyer of the firstborn,” or “the one destroying the firstborn.” It is a present participle. It is as if the author is describing the first Passover as it was happening to Moses while he was writing down the events in the epistle.

These things that occurred to Moses required faith. The Lord said what would occur, and any who didn’t believe and failed to act would suffer the consequences. Those who did believe, and who followed through in their belief by applying the blood, would be passed over. Thus, in this, Moses instituted the Passover for all generations who followed. From that typology, the fulfillment is found in the work of Christ Jesus and the acceptance of His work by the people of the world.

Life application: To this day, Jewish families around the world observe the Passover. It symbolized the redemption of the people from Egypt and its bitter bondage. An innocent lamb was killed, and its blood was applied to the lintel and sides of the door as a sign that there were faithful believers inside the home. When the destroyer saw the blood, he passed over. As it says, “by faith” Moses instituted this ordinance and applied the blood. The blood is the material cause of salvation, while faith in its application is the instrumental cause. Under the New Covenant, Paul says in the Colossians 2:16, 17 –

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

The Passover, along with all of Israel’s other mandates which came under the law, was only a shadow which prefigured the work of Jesus. Jesus, as John states in his gospel account, is the true Lamb of God. It is His sacrifice that brings us out of real bondage – that of slavery to sin. It is faith in what He did that redeems us and gives us new life.

The question for every person then is, “Have you applied the blood of Christ, by faith, to your heart?” Christ’s blood is the material cause of salvation. Faith in his shed blood is the instrumental cause. Belief in the heart fulfills the typology of the application of blood (see Romans 10:9, 10). As the Passover only looked forward to Christ, then it is Christ alone who can truly save you from destruction. Again, as Paul says, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” As Moses acted by faith, so those who look for salvation, while living in this world, must also look to what God has done, in faith. Have faith in Him and in His work, and you too, like Moses, will be known as one of God’s faithful – chosen and loved.

Thank you, O God, for the precious Lamb, our Lord Jesus. Thank You for freeing us from the chains which bound us in slavery to sin and which could only result in death. Now, through Christ and His sacrifice, we are not only free from condemnation, but we have also been given new and eternal life! Hallelujah and Amen!

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. Hebrews 11:29

The author, speaking of the time of Moses, now goes from the singular, “he,” of verses 27 & 28 and includes the entire congregation of Israel by saying, “By faith they.” This corresponds to the word “them” at the end of verse 28. Moses has stood for the whole until that point, and now the whole is said to have possessed the same faith as he did. With the faith of the corporate body revealed, it then says that “they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*.”

The memorable account is recorded in Exodus 13. There was a sea in front of Israel, no way to travel to the right or to the left, and the Egyptians were behind them. The only avenue of escape was for the sea to be divided. The Lord did this. Israel passed through with a wall of water on each side of them, and they were delivered. The words of the New Testament are important in identifying which body of water is meant. The Greek specifically reads *Erythran Thalassan*, or “the Red Sea.”

The Hebrew words in the Exodus account are *yam suph*. Many translate this as “the Sea of Reeds,” because *suph* means “reed.” Because of this, the account of crossing through the Red Sea is often denied and instead it is said that Israel simply passed through a shallow marsh or one of the bitter lakes.

This is incorrect. First, the word *suph* as a verb means “end,” such as in the termination of something. Thus, the sea could be known as “the sea at the ending,” which is in relation to the land of Israel where the land ends at one of the fingers of the Red Sea. This is seen in 1 Kings which uses the same term, *yam suph*

-

“King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which *is* near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.” 1 Kings 9:26

The locations Elath and Edom show without a doubt what this means. The Bible is simply using a term where Israel is situated as its reference point. This occurs elsewhere in the Exodus account as well. Further, one would not build a fleet of ships for sailing in the ocean and place them in a marshy sea of reeds. And finally, the New Testament definitively identifies the body in this verse (and elsewhere) as *Erythran Thalassan*, or Red Sea. This corresponds to the Greek translation of the Old Testament of these passages. Thus it was *always* understood to be the Red Sea, not a swampy marsh of reeds.

Understanding that this is the body of water, and not a shallow lake of reeds, the verse then says, “whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.” The Greek literally reads, “were swallowed up.” This then corresponds to the words of the Song of Moses in Exodus 15:12 –

“You stretched out Your right hand;
The earth swallowed them.”

They were drowned, but they were also swallowed up as if consumed in a meal. The difference in fate between Israel and the Egyptians came down to one word, faith. The people believed in the Lord, and they were delivered by Him. The Egyptians didn’t, and they were swallowed up.

Life application: As noted above, while at the final point before crossing, the Israelites were hemmed in on all sides. The name of the place where they were was *Pi Hahiroth*, “mouth of caverns.” This indicates they were wholly closed in. The people were certainly afraid and questioned Moses about the decisions which had brought them to the seemingly impossible position they were in, however –

“And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.’” Exodus 14:13, 14

Following that, it says, “Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry *land*, and the waters were divided” (Exodus 14:21).

The entire Egyptian army didn’t drown in knee deep water. If they did, that would be a greater miracle than the parting of the sea. Just as the Israelites had faith and passed through “the Red Sea as by dry *land*,” so you should have faith that:

- 1) The Bible’s record of events is true, and
- 2) God will safely bring you out of whatever bondage, difficulty, or trial you are facing.

Trust in Him with all your heart and soul, even when you’re hemmed in from all sides. Have faith that the Lord loves you and will deliver you.

Lord, from time to time I can feel the walls hemming me in – creditors, bitter family members, physical pains, troubles, trials, and afflictions! But You O God ... I trust You to keep me from drowning under this Sea of Woes and to carry me safely and triumphantly to Your better home. Until that day, I rejoice in Your splendid hand. Amen.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.
Hebrews 11:30

The author now turns from Moses to the times of the man who replaced him as leader of Israel, Joshua. Of the recorded life of Joshua, nothing is specifically said concerning his faith, despite the faith he and Caleb displayed in the book of Numbers. Rather, the accounts recorded during his leadership of Israel deal with

the siege of Jericho – the collapsing of its walls and the faith of a harlot who lived within those walls. In this verse, the words begin with, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.”

The author takes the account at face value and accepts Scripture exactly as it is written. The city had walls, and those walls were unable to protect the city. They came down not by the power of the besieging army, but it was rather by faith in the word of the Lord. He told them what would occur, and Israel simply obeyed His word, believed what He said, and what He said is what came to pass. The walls “fell down after they were encircled for seven days.”

The entire account is found in Joshua 6. During those seven days, Israel marched around the city, doing as the Lord instructed. There would have been taunts and jeers at the army as they did so. But not a word was spoken by them in reply. For six days, they marched around the city one time each day, doing as instructed as they marched. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. At the sound of the trumpets, the people gave a great shout and the walls fell down.

The entire event required faith that the Lord would perform as He promised, and their faith was rewarded. John Chrysostom says of this event, “The soundings of trumpets, though one were to sound for ten thousand years, cannot throw down walls, but faith can do all things.” It is a lesson for us to remember, and it is an account that asks us to be faithful to the word of the Lord. He has spoken; He will perform.

Life application: Archaeologically, this is one of the stories of the Bible that non-believers have spent a great deal of time trying to disprove. Unlike many other accounts, this one can be verified by simply going to the site and looking over the ruins. The evidence has been substantiated by believers and supposedly disproved by non-believers. Each determination was based on the scientist’s findings of how they perceive what occurred in the Bible and how that relates to their larger worldview. In the end, the Bible account is the only eye-witness testimony for the destruction of Jericho. All of history past can only be known by what was written

about it and/or diligently piecing together the evidence based on the preserved remains. Here is what the Bible says about this particular incident –

“So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.” Joshua 6:20

Regardless of the fight among archaeologists, the account in the Bible stands as recorded evidence. If it were untrue, one would think that the surrounding nations could have just as easily recorded their side of the story. No such record exists. In fact, no part of the Bible has ever been disproved. Remember, not every Bible story has as yet been proved true, but that which has been studied has always vindicated the biblical account. Just as the Israelites had faith to march around the walls in obedience, God asks you to have faith that what is recorded in His word is true as well. What the Bible records forms a sure foundation for our faith; a faith that can never stumble if it rests ultimately in the Person of Jesus.

Lord, it sure is wonderful to read the stories recorded in Your word and to see how they fit into redemptive history. Each account serves a particular purpose in helping us to understand You and how we are to interact with You. Thank You for the story of real events about real people who, like us, are part of Your wonderful unfolding story. Amen!

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. Hebrews 11:31

The author now turns to Rahab, the harlot found in Joshua 2 & 6, and who is recorded in Matthew 1:5 in the genealogy of Christ Jesus. She is then mentioned here in Hebrews, and once again in James 2:25. He begins with, “By faith the harlot Rahab.”

What he will detail is considered as an act of faith worthy of note, and which led to her being brought into the nation of Israel, joining with them according to their law, marrying a man, and from them would continue the line of Messiah – first through David, and then on down to Christ Jesus. Rahab would have been David’s great-great-grandmother, the wife of Salmon.

Here though, it specifically calls her, “the harlot.” Some scholars argue that the Hebrew word used to describe her as a harlot doesn’t necessarily mean that, and that she was probably an innkeeper. First, that is rubbish, but secondly, the Greek word here, *porné*, clearly identifies her (as does the Hebrew) as a prostitute. There is no mincing of the word. And yet, despite this, she “did not perish with those who did not believe.”

This is a poor choice of translation. It should read, “those who were disobedient.” The people were disobedient to the natural knowledge of God, and they were set for destruction even before Israel’s entry into Canaan. Their time had come, but Rahab knew this and believed in the power of God and the surety of what was to come upon Jericho. She believed “when she had received the spies with peace.”

The coming of the spies to Rahab’s house was certainly done with intent. How does one spy out a city without raising too much alarm? Ask for the local prostitute! By going into her home, nothing unusual would ever be suspected. In her reception of the spies, and in the details of the surrounding narrative, which was carefully recorded in Scripture, a fallen woman is raised to the high position of a woman of faith, and a prostitute was entered into the genealogy of the coming Messiah.

As a point of theology concerning the issue of justification, the accounts of Abraham offering up Isaac, and this account of Rahab receiving the spies, are both used in James 2 to support an idea which has been highly misunderstood in the church. James 2:24 says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” However, Paul says in Romans 3 –

“Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

How are these two reconciled? The answer is found in this passage of Hebrews 11. The exact same examples used by James are those which are addressed now in Hebrews, offering up Isaac, and receiving the spies. James calls them “works,” but the author of Hebrews says of both of them, “By faith...” Therefore, they are “works of faith.” In other words, faith is the basis for their works. They are not deeds of law, but they are works which spring out of faith. In the end, it is the faith which justifies. If works are included in the act of faith, they are still works of faith; and it is the faith behind the works which receives the reward, not the deed itself because the deeds are merely an expression of the faith.

The example of Franklin and Bill, which was detailed in the commentary on Hebrews 11:4, shows this. This will be more specifically explained when we arrive at James 2:24 in due time (the Lord permitting). Until then, it needs to be remembered that all deeds of faith find their reward in the faith, not the deed itself.

Life application: Thinking on the account of Rahab, it is hoped that you will realize that it doesn't matter what you've done in your life, or how badly you've messed things up, Jesus will accept you if you will simply have faith. Then someday you too will be mentioned in heaven's great Hall of Fame of Faith.

Lord, the story of Rahab shows that even a prostitute can be cleansed of her life and brought into your flock! This encourages us that our lives can also be used for Your glory despite the things we may have done wrong. Give us the ability to look forward in faith, and to leave behind all the wrongdoings of our past lives. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:
Hebrews 11:32

The author has, by the completion of the previous verse, set the general tone of what faith means and how it is demonstrated. He has covered all of the period of time, from creation to that of the patriarchs, and even to the time of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan. The last person noted was Rahab the harlot. From there, he says, "And what more shall I say?" He knows that the list could go on throughout the rest of Scripture, but instead he notes that such a list would take more time than the Lord has permitted in His inspired epistle. And so he says, "For the time would fail me."

It is an expression which confirms that there is not sufficient time to note all of those of faith by name, and to then also note the individual instances which they should be recognized for. If he had sufficient time, he would "tell of Gideon and Barak."

Barak's life and deeds are recorded in Judges 4 & 5. Gideon's are recorded in Judges 6-8. From there, he notes, "and Samson and Jephthah." The life and times of Jephthah are found in Judges 11, 12; and those of Samson are found in Judges 13-16. Next, he says, "also of David and Samuel." The birth through the death of Samuel is recorded in 1 Samuel 1-25. The main record of the life of David is recorded from 1 Samuel 16 – 1 Kings 2. If you notice, the author mentioned each coupling of names in reverse order of their actual appearance in Scripture:

Gideon – Barak

Samson – Jephthah

David – Samuel

However, each coupling leads in the proper order to the next coupling. In each of these couplings, the most prominent name is first. Gideon is more renowned than

Barak, Samson is more renowned than Jephthah, and David is more renowned than Samuel. Further, each first has more recorded about him in Scripture than the second.

Finally, the author notes, “and the prophets.” The entire list of the many prophets of Israel is summed up in those words. From here, the author will lightly touch upon the deeds of faith for which these many people are generally noted. Verses 11:32-34 record deeds of active faith, whereas verses 35-38 record deeds of passive faith.

Life application: From this verse, through verse 38, we are told of a range of people and of the various trials they faced as they demonstrated faith worthy of a true saint. As you think on their situations, remember their failings as well. Maybe you will see yourself mirrored in them and be encouraged that the Lord can use you in a great way. Gideon (Judges 6-8) was so unsure of his own abilities that he asked the Lord for a sign. When he received it, he asked for another... not the most confident soul in town.

Barak (Judges 4) was told by Israel’s judge (Deborah) that the Lord had commanded him to take an army of men and that he would defeat Israel’s enemies. In verse 8 it says “And Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!’” Instead of believing the Lord’s directive, he questioned the command’s validity. By asking Deborah to go, he was checking both her truthfulness and the surety of the Lord’s word.

Samson (Judges 13-16) was set apart from birth to God and became Israel’s judge. However, he had a weak will towards women, was over-confident in his own abilities, and he often took revenge that wasn’t proportionate to offenses made against him.

Jephthah (Judges 11-12) was the son of a prostitute. He made a rash vow to sacrifice the first living thing that came out of his house. To his horror, it was his own daughter. However, his vow stood and he performed his vow at her expense.

David committed adultery, murder, and other grievous sins. However, with a faithful and repentant heart, he was considered Israel's great king and sweet psalmist.

Samuel was Israel's last judge. He failed to restrain his own children and raise them properly. This resulted in the end of Israel's theocracy and a turn to an earthly kingship rule.

Are you seeing any of your failings in these men of faith? If so, then understand that despite them, God looked on their faithful and repentant hearts. He also looked on their deeds of faith, and He accepted them, forgiving every sin and trespass.

Lord God, it sure is good to look back on the people recorded in Scripture, and who are then noted in the book of Hebrews, and to see that they are not unlike me. But even with their failings, You have placed them in Your Hall of Fame of Faith. This gives me hope that I too may someday be remembered, not for my failings, but for my heart which is devoted to You. Thank You that You grant us a right standing with You through simple faith in the Person and work of Jesus. Amen.

...who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Hebrews 11:33

The author now turns to the active acts of faith of those who had gone before, and whose deeds are mentioned in this Hall of Fame of Faith. Some of these acts are obviously stated about single individuals. The event can be specifically identified as to who he was thinking about. Other noted acts of faith can be applied to several different people as they are more general in nature. Also, these recorded acts are not constrained to those in the previous verse, showing that both their names, and these now-mentioned deeds, are general listings which

came to mind, and are not directly connected to one another. He gave names, he now gives events, and both lists are just his general thoughts.

Understanding this, he begins with, “who through faith subdued kingdoms.” The Greek word translated as “subdued” is a compound word found only here in Scripture. It gives the sense of “struggling against,” and thus by implication, to “overcome.” This could be applied to a host of stories in the Old Testament. In Genesis 14, Abraham led a war party with three hundred and eighteen of his trained servants and fought against the kings mentioned there. Moses led Israel when they faced several adversaries, starting with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The list goes on throughout the history of Israel in judges, kings, and even common people.

The author next says that some “worked righteousness.” This isn’t merely speaking of the personal righteous behavior of an individual, but of the dispensing of righteousness by someone. These people dealt in accord with God’s law and His expected standards. Working righteousness can include the destruction of God’s enemies, which is according to His will, and it can include faithfully upholding covenants made with others. The actions which are in accord with His laws, standards, and judgments are noted in many people throughout Israel’s history.

The author next says that some “obtained promises.” Hebrews 6:15 said of Abraham that “after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” This is the idea here. It speaks of temporal promises which people faithfully believed would be fulfilled. A marvelous example is found in the New Testament, but which fits perfectly with the thought expressed by the author here –

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.” Luke 2:25-32

Finally, the verse ends with the words, “stopped the mouths of lions.” This is a direct reference to the prophet Daniel as is recorded in Daniel 6. It could also be indirectly applied to David who “killed both lion and bear” (1 Samuel 17:36), or Samson who “tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat” (Judges 14:6). It could even be taken metaphorically of the defeat of an enemy in battle who is compared to a lion (see 2 Samuel 23:20). Such references reveal the faithful character of these heroes of the faith.

Life application: The Lord took these fallible, and often weak-willed, men and used them for His glory and for our edification. Their stories have echoed down through time. Each one of them has been used as an example by similarly weak-willed people who have gone on, in the strength of the Lord, to accomplish tasks which would otherwise be impossible. And so, you too can read about these people and then determine to accomplish whatever task is set before you. If the future – whether the immediate or distant – looms with difficulty, take to heart the wonderful examples noted here. Insert your name into the Hall of Fame of Faith by trusting in the grand and splendid provision of Jesus Christ. He will never leave you; He will never forsake you.

Heavenly Father – I am simply overwhelmed to know that Your hand is with me in the tasks You have chosen for my life. Give me the courage and ability to never sway from bringing you the glory and honor that You are due. All hail the GLORIOUS name of Jesus who has made this possible by bringing me close to You once again. Amen.

...quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Hebrews 11:34

The list of deeds of the faithful continues in this verse. Here, the author reminds us of the great faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three men who stood against the king of Babylon at the risk of being thrown into a fiery furnace. As it says of them, they “quenched the violence of fire.” The words should rather say, “quenched the power of fire.” The account is found in Daniel 3. When so threatened, they responded as one –

“If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Daniel 3:17

The author next says that some “escaped the edge of the sword.” The word “edge” is literally “mouth,” and it is in the plural. The edge of the sword is likened to a devouring instrument that consumes souls. Being in the plural, the symbolism is that of cutting both ways and causing maximum damage. To escape “the edges of the sword” is to then have been spared in a remarkable way. It is as if there was nowhere to go, and yet relief was found. There was a trust in God, and God delivered them.

David and Elijah both escaped such a sword, as did others in various accounts, but it may be that the term, which is exactly used by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is what is on the author’s mind. Jeremiah prophesied of those who would escape the sword when exiled to Egypt, returning again to Judah. It may be that these were the only exiles who had faith in the Lord, and the Lord returned them based on that. In Ezekiel, it speaks of those who “escape the sword” from among the nations as well. The few people of faith, living in exile, would be spared.

The author next says, “out of weakness were made strong.” Here, it should say, “from weakness.” This is not necessarily speaking of someone who was sick or debilitated and then reinvigorated (such as Hezekiah). Rather, it is probably a reference to Samson who “from weakness” was able to destroy the Philistines by collapsing the building down upon them and upon himself.

Next, he notes those who “became valiant in battle.” Numerous heroes of Israel could be on the author’s mind, and he makes this a summary statement of any or all he was thinking about. Joshua, Barak, Saul, David, and many of the men under them, are recorded as champions in the battle, displaying a valiant nature in warfare.

Finally, the verse says that they “turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Again, the number of accounts is long concerning such exploits. Saul’s son Jonathan, in faith, began a battle which led to a route of the Philistines. At other times, the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Assyria (among others) are noted as having been turned back.

Life application: Many of the prophets of old were threatened with death for speaking the word of the Lord, but the Lord often (but not always) saved them from the edge of the sword. Those whose weakness was turned to strength actually include all of those herein mentioned in this commentary, as well as all others in this Hall of Fame. On our own, despite how we may perceive ourselves, we are incapable of handling life’s pressures and stresses. God gives strength to all, but not all give Him the credit He is due. The greats in the Hall of Fame are those who became valiant. They realized that the power they possessed was granted to them, not something which came from them. Remember to praise the Lord for every accomplishment that you participate in.

Again we thank you Lord for the wonderful stories of faithful followers who are recorded in Your word. We look back on their achievements and see Your hand at work in their lives. Likewise, be with us and guide us through the flames, the swords, the weaknesses, and the battles. In return, we will be sure to turn and give You the praise that You are due! Amen.

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

Hebrews 11:35

Whereas the author noted active deeds of faith in the previous verses, he now notes passive acts through verse 38. Here he says, "Women received their dead raised to life again." The Greek literally reads, "by a resurrection," and it should be translated that way. This is because it is the same word used in the next sentence of this same verse.

The two examples which are certainly on the author's mind are found in 1 Kings 17:17-24 & 2 King 4:8-37. Each account looks, in type, to the work of Christ. They are true accounts which are recorded from Israel's history, and which reflect the hope of the resurrection as provided in the coming Messiah.

The author next says, "Others were tortured." The word used here is unique in Scripture, *tumpanizó*. It signifies to beat a drum (one can think of a tympani-drum), and thus it means that these people were beaten to death, probably with clubs. However, it could be referring to generally cruel torture of various kinds. It is noted in the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees 6 that a man named Eleazar was martyred because he refused to defile himself with swine's flesh. It could also be referring to others in the Old Testament who were physically abused in various ways for their lives of faith. They accepted this punishment while "not accepting deliverance."

The implication in those words is that they could have taken whatever action was demanded of them, but which was contrary to what is morally right, and have been saved from their torture. Instead, though, they refused to budge, knowing "that they might obtain a better resurrection."

This doesn't mean that when they are resurrected they will have a better resurrection than those around them who will also be resurrected. Rather, it is a contrasting statement in relation to the women mentioned in this verse who

received their sons back. The resurrection there was a temporary raising to life which would eventually result in their final death. However, these people who were tortured were willing to go through that torture because they knew it wasn't the end for them. Rather, it was a necessary step on the road to the final resurrection of the righteous. It was, and it remains, the great hope for all who have trusted in Messiah. It is certain that this has always been the hope of the faithful people of God because Daniel wrote about it many centuries before the coming of Messiah –

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.
³Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:2, 3

Life application: As noted above, twice in the Old Testament, young boys were raised to life. Once was during the time of Elijah (1 Kings 17) and once during the time of Elisha (2 Kings 4). Read the following two verses which occurred during these accounts. Then read what Jesus said in the raising of Lazarus. See if you can determine a difference –

“And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him.’” 1 Kings 17:21

“He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord.” 2 King 4:33

“Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’” John 11:43

The difference is that Jesus, while thanking the Father, raised Lazarus under His own authority. Elijah and Elisha both prayed to the Lord, who is Jesus, for His authority to restore. Now think on the significance of this. By faith these prophets looked forward, not seeing what we see. How much more confident should we be after having the fullness of God in Christ!

In Christ is the hope of the resurrection, and so understand that there was and is a reward for being faithful during persecution, torture, and martyrdom. Should you ever face such a difficult ordeal, in and through your ordeal you also can expect a glorious resurrection and the crown of life from the hand of the Lord.

Lord God, we look to the completed work of the Messiah, knowing that what Jesus has accomplished has paved the way for our own resurrection. Help us to live by faith, never fearing, never fretting, and never regretting! Instead, fill us with Your constant and unfailing peace, and allow us to faithfully testify to Your splendor all of our days. Amen.

Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. Hebrews 11:36

The author continues on with his list of afflictions of the faithful of ages past, now noting that, “Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings.” The prophets of old, in particular, received mockings from the people. A well-known example of this is found in 2 Kings 2 –

“Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, ‘Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!’” 2 Kings 2:23

At this, and other times, the prophets endured mockings. In this instance, it didn't go so well for those who mocked him. The story goes on to say that two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.

In Jeremiah 37, it is recorded that the prophet Jeremiah was struck and then put in prison. Although it is speculation, it is likely that this was a scourging, or a whipping. The law allowed such punishment for violators of it, and it is reasonable to conclude that this is what Jeremiah received, whether he deserved it or not –

“So Irijah seized Jeremiah and brought him to the princes. ¹⁵ Therefore the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison.” Jeremiah 37:14, 15

These are just two examples of such treatment recorded in Scripture to show that the author remembered and understood the afflictions that the people of God had endured because of their faith. He continues on with, “and of chains and imprisonment.”

From Joseph, the son of Jacob, to Jeremiah the prophet and others, faithful followers of the Lord were imprisoned for their faith. This is recorded of the seer Hanani in 2 Chronicles 16:7-10 –

“And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: ‘Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. ⁸ Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand. ⁹ For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.’ ¹⁰ Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for *he was* enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people at that time.”

For simply speaking the word of the Lord in open rebuke of the king's disobedience, the king had Hanani placed in prison. The same is occurring in the world today. Christians who speak out against wickedness and immorality – speaking only the truth of the situation without threat or harmful intent – are being imprisoned for their words.

Life application: Here, the painful list of what the faithful of Scripture endured continues. Some people think that accepting Christ means blessings, abundance, provision, health, and wealth, but – like these Old Testament saints – the faithful in Christendom have been martyred by the millions. Many times, this persecution has come from within the church, such as during the Spanish Inquisition and against those of the Reformation. The whole point of listing the abuses and trials that these people endured is to enlighten the path of the Christian to what we can also expect.

For simply speaking the word of the Lord to a nation who didn't want to hear it, Jeremiah was imprisoned in a muddy cistern and left to starve to death when the city's bread was used up. Thankfully he was rescued. Around the world today, faithful pastors and evangelists are being handcuffed and led to prison for preaching from the Bible. This is right at the doors of America also. Determine now to side with God and His word regardless of what you face.

Lord God, none of us would look forward to jeers, flogging, chains, or imprisonment with glee, but we ask that if such a time should come, You would sustain us and give us the courage to face it resolutely. All of this we pray in the name of, and for the sake of, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Hebrews 11:37

The author continues with the sad list of the ill-treatment of the people of faith recorded in Scripture and in the traditions of the Jewish people. He begins this verse with, “They were stoned.”

Stoning was a type of capital punishment specifically designated within the law of Moses. It would be a painful, crunchy way to die, but it was also a sign of the complete rejection of an individual. This is because there was no direct contact between the executioners and the condemned. Instead, the symbolism was that the person was unclean and cast off from a distance, just as a stone is cast away. Unfortunately, it happened to righteous people of faith by those who were unrighteous. In an interesting, but contrasting parallel between the Old and New Testaments, the last martyr of the Old Testament was Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. He was stoned in 2 Chronicles 24. Upon his death, it said –

“Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son; and as he died, he said, ‘The Lord look on it, and repay!’” 2 Chronicles 24:22

In the New Testament, the first martyr also died by stoning, and upon his death it says –

“Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:60

The author next says that “they were sawn in two.” This is referring to the Jewish tradition that the prophet Isaiah was sawn in two by the wicked king Manasseh.

The verse next says that they “were tempted.” This doesn’t seem like a great horror, and therefore scholars wonder why it is listed among the other cruelties, but what it probably is referring to is the practice of giving a person who is condemned to die a chance to recant of the reason for the punishment, tempting him to side with his persecutors and to give up on his faith. When facing a terrible type of death, one would face a real challenge in such a temptation.

Next is listed that they “were slain with the sword.” One prominent example is that of the priests of the Lord who were slain for having assisted David when he was escaping from Saul. There it says –

“And the king said to Doeg, ‘You turn and kill the priests!’ So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod.” 2 Samuel 22:18

The author then finishes the verse with a general statement about the condition of many others and the types of lives they lived, as well as the treatment they received, by saying, “They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.”

The idea of “sheepskins and goatskins” is that of a rough garment, something a prophet would be noted for, such as in Zechariah 13:4. Being destitute signifies no real earthly possessions, no home, and no regular income. They were wholly dependent on the Lord, such as when Elijah was fed by the Lord by sending ravens to bring him his food in 1 Kings 17. Being afflicted would include the challenges which externally came against them – heat, cold, lack of shelter, attacks, and so on. Being tormented would be the external harm they received from others who directly persecuted them.

Life application: Again we see the world’s treatment of God’s people. This is what those of faith suffered in olden times, and this is what true people of faith continue to suffer in history today. Not all of them, of course, but such things happen to God’s people in countries around the world, and such persecutions are

coming upon His people even in supposedly “Christian” nations today. There is a great movement away from the solid foundation which is found in Jesus Christ. Like the people of faith from times past, those who speak out God’s word today are also likely to be persecuted, but despite the costs, the rewards are worth it.

Heavenly Father, despite the troubles and persecutions we can expect because of our unwavering faith, let us stand firm in our convictions. Our faith will surely outlast these temporary and weak bodies. Thank You for the promise of new ones. While the world of corruption and death will consume our tormentors, the faithful in Christ will rise to walk in glory. Hallelujah and Amen!

...of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. Hebrews 11:38

This is a description of those who have been referred to in the preceding verses. He has described their plight, their character, and their ill-treatment by the world. He now tells about their status in relation to the world around them by saying, “of whom the world was not worthy.” Vincent’s Word Studies notes what the term “world” signifies in this particular context –

“By the world (κόσμος) is not meant the corrupt world, as in John and Paul (see on Hebrews 11:7), but the world considered as an economy which was unworthy of these, because ruled by sense and not by faith. Their plane of life was higher.”

These men were placed by God into the stream of time and human existence (see Acts 17:26-28), but they were out of place in relation to the world around them. They were living by faith in something which lay ahead of them, and thus, that sphere of time and placement was not worthy of them. It is as if because of their faith they were living in the kingdom of the Lord even though they were among those who had no comprehension of what that meant. All others around them were living apart from the promise of Messiah, and their lives were mere futile

moments of living for self. Despite this exalted state in which they lived, the author says, “They wandered in deserts and mountains.”

This is probably a reference to the book of 2 Maccabees. It is a historical record of the life of the Jewish people. Though not inspired Scripture, it was a text which the author would have been aware of. In that book it says –

“But Judas Maccabeus with nine others or thereabout, withdrew himself into the wilderness, and lived in the mountains after the manner of beasts, with his company, who fed on herbs continually lest they should be partakers of the pollution;” 2 Maccabees. 5:27.

Other prophets throughout the Old Testament, such as Elijah, wandered in such a manner as well. They were men often without homes, without ordinary lives of working the land, and they lived a very skimpy existence in comparison to those around them. The author then continues with, “in dens and caves of the earth.”

The word translated as “dens” is the Greek word *spélaion*. It signifies a cavern, and equates to a cave or a hiding place. One can see the root of our modern word for cave explorers, or spelunkers, in it. The next word, translated as “caves,” is the Greek word *opé*. It signifies a hole, as if where light enters, and so it can be a cavern, a spring of water (see James 3:11), etc. One can see the root of our modern word for “opening.”

These men, at times, lived in places that seem more suited for jackals, lions, or bats. David, at times, dwelt in caves. This is seen in 1 Samuel 22:1 –

“David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. So when his brothers and all his father’s house heard *it*, they went down there to him.”

Despite already being promised that someday he would be king of Israel, he was also a man who could dwell in a cave in order to survive. His character was such that his hope of Messiah allowed him to live life in a way that the world around him mattered little. This is true with all of those who wholeheartedly live by faith. Present difficulties are merely a temporary stepping stone to the life which is truly life.

Life application: Go back over the past 37 verses and remind yourself of whom the author states “the world was not worthy.” They were all fallible people who lived fallible lives. They failed their spouses and their children; they deceived family members; one committed adultery and murder; one was a prostitute and another the son of a prostitute. And the list goes on. These people lived lives just like each of us. But “the world was not worthy of them.” It is their faith in something greater that set them above the other peoples and systems of government in which they lived. Many of them, while the rest of the world was living in spacious homes or palaces, wandered without any true comfort at all. They were pilgrims, simply living life for the future; not worried about that which is temporary. One wonderful story of the Rechabites comes to mind. This family, detailed in Jeremiah 35, was given a directive by one of their forefathers –

“But they said, ‘We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, ‘You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever. ⁷ You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have *any of these*; but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners.’ ⁸ Thus we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, ⁹ nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; nor do we have vineyard, field, or seed. ¹⁰ But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.’”
Jeremiah 35:6-10

They steadfastly followed the directive of their father and God used them as an example of faithfulness. This is in contrast to the people of Israel who continuously failed to follow the directives of their God. Indeed, so pleased was God with the example of the Rechabites that He made this promise to them –

“...therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.’” Jeremiah 35:19

Lord, thank You for the gift of our faith that You have given us. We know it is what is truly pleasing to You. Never let us slip or falter in it, but rather increase it so that we may always walk in a manner that will bring You glory and demonstrate to others our joy in serving You. Amen.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, Hebrews 11:39

The author now sums up the faithful lives of the people he has mentioned, even from verse 11:2. In this verse, he now says, “And all these.” In verse 11:2, they were described as “the elders.” From there, he made a short note about faith in the creation account, and from there he went directly to the faith of Abel and then numerous others. He finally gave a general list of people, not by name, but by how they demonstrated faith. This then is who “all these” is speaking of. Of them, he says, “having obtained a good testimony.”

This is the proper translation of the words, based on the same phrase used in verse 11:2. He had said there that they obtained a good testimony, he then described what that meant in the chapter, and he now repeats that, showing that what he claimed concerning them was accurate. And this was “through faith.”

All of the examples given demonstrated that it was by faith that they had received their good testimony. The author’s consistency of thought, and his ability to sum up his argument, is beautifully laid out.

Finally, despite having obtained this good testimony through faith, he says they “did not receive the promise.” What is the promise he is referring to? It is that of Messiah, and it is of entering into what God has promised through Messiah.

This is completely certain because in Hebrews 6:15 it says of Abraham, “And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” However, Abraham is listed in this chapter and it is said of him (along with all the others) that he did not receive the promise. What Abraham received in 6:15 was the promise of a son who would lead to Messiah, and thus the surety of a multiplication of descendants.

Again, in verse 10:36, it says, “For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.” Here, he is speaking to those who have trusted in Christ, and who have thus received what Christ promises. And yet, they are still waiting to receive that same promise. What this means then is that there is the reception of the promise as a surety, and yet there is the fact that the promise has not yet been received in reality.

This is what Paul speaks of in his letters. In Ephesians 1, those who have believed in Christ have received God’s promise. And yet, that is only so far as it is assured. The proof of that is the sealing of the Holy Spirit which is a “guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:14). We have received the promise, but we are waiting to obtain what we have received. There is no contradiction here. It is all based on the work of Messiah, and it is absolutely guaranteed once it is given by God. Thus, the doctrine of eternal salvation is, once again, on prominent display when properly evaluating what is stated in the word of God.

Life application: The saints of ages past lived by faith in God, but He is a God they couldn’t see, even if they occasionally saw some of His miraculous works. However, their faith wasn’t in vain. They knew the God of Israel is the One true God and it was in Him they placed their hopes. This knowledge wasn’t limited to Israel though. As the prostitute Rahab said –

“And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” Joshua 2:11

As is apparent from the text, the entire city of Jericho understood who they were up against, and yet only Rahab replaced the head-knowledge with faith. Because of this, she became known as one of the faithful of all times. However, she – along with all the others of the Old Testament – despite receiving commendation for their faith, has not yet received the promise. The coming verse explains why, but try to remember this when you are facing a long-term illness, years of praying for something that seems to never come about, or any of a host of other things which seem to never happen.

These people waited their whole lives, and have continued to wait thousands of years in whatever interim state exists for them, for a promise yet to come. How much more then should we wait patiently upon the Lord and His good timing.

Lord, it certainly is hard for us to wait. We are so used to eating three times a day that when we miss a meal we really feel it. We are used to seeing the sunrise come with regularity. Each new day becomes one less ahead of us. Help us to be patient, even as our days slip past, waiting on Your good timing for all things. In Jesus spectacular name we pray. Amen.

God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Hebrews 11:40

This verse completes the chapter, and it explains what was just said in the previous verse. Taken together, they read, “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

What the author is saying in the words, “God having provided something better for us,” is that God understood beforehand, what the anticipated outcome of His plan would be. The verb used is found only here in the Bible, and it signifies to see in advance. The word “provided” which is used here is only suitable if one understands that it applies to both those of the past and those now. In other words, “us” is speaking of everyone in the process. Those people, along with us, have something better ahead which God anticipated for all to enjoy and participate in because of our faith. This, then, is more fully understood with the words, “that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

The verb translated as “made perfect” is *teleioó*. It signifies working through an entire process in order to reach an end-stage. As Vincent’s Word Studies says –

“Each successive stage of history gathers up into itself the fruit of preceding stages. This passage teaches the solidarity of humanity in its work as well as in itself. The man of the present requires the work and suffering and achievement of the men of the past to complete him and his work. The future men will, in like manner, require the work and suffering and achievement of the men of today to complete them. The whole creation, in all its successive aeons, moves together toward: ‘The one far-off, divine event.’”

Something lies ahead for the faithful of all ages. God has an end-goal in mind and what He has prepared is glorious. The final chapters of Revelation speak of it, but hints of it are interspersed throughout various parts of Scripture. In the end, what has been experienced by those of the past, and what is experienced by us now, is being worked out toward a marvelous end. This is why Paul made this statement to those in Corinth (and thus to us) –

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Life application: Until Christ had come and fulfilled the law, man stood condemned for being unable to meet its standards. Even the temporary atonement provided by the sacrifice of animals was insufficient to perfect God's people. Because of this, they could not be glorified at their deaths. However, since Christ came, all believers – both those looking forward to the cross and those now who look back to it – will reach that end-stage together. It is the goal for the redeemed which God has known in advance, even since the very beginning.

What a glorious promise we have awaiting us. If you haven't yet accepted Jesus Christ, now is the time. The moment of your death is unknown but to God; don't meet that moment without Christ's righteousness to cover you.

Lord God! Thank you for the wonderful Hall of Fame of Faith which is recorded in the book of Hebrews. Its forty verses show us that there have been those who have lived in faith, just like us. They were fallible folks, saved by their faith in You alone and through the blood of the Lamb. The message is always the same – You will restore us to Yourself, and we simply need to receive what You have done. All glory to You, O God. Amen.

CHAPTER 12

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1

This is a long verse, and it requires precision of translation. The word “also” is, in some translations, tied to the cloud of witnesses –

“...since we also are surrounded by.”

That is incorrect. That would indicate that those in Chapter 11 were surrounded by their own cloud of witnesses, just as we are. That is not the intent. Rather, “also” is connected to the need for endurance –

“Therefore we also ... let us lay aside.”

Other nuances of this verse vary from translation to translation, and each needs to be thought through without accepting one – fallible – translation at the expense of proper intent. With this understanding, the author begins with “Therefore.” He is making an affirmation of the facts he has stated in order to exhort his readers (and thus us) to be attentive to his words.

Next, he says, “we also.” That means that he, along with those who read his words, is to act in accord with the exhortation he is making. He is not excluding himself from what is to be stated, and he expects those who read his words would follow suit.

The words, “since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,” are speaking of those named (or referred to by their deeds, even if not specifically named) in the previous chapter. The written testimony of their lives of faith, being worked out in deeds of faith, is a witness to us which forms “a cloud.” The word is *nephos*, and it is only found here. It is a mass of cloud which is then equated to a great company of people. Such a cloud is indefinite in size and shape, and it simply forms into a whole. The record of the lives of those faithful souls recorded in Scripture is given to bear witness to what God finds worthy of note.

Understanding that each one of them was noted for faith leading to action, he then continues that just as this cloud surrounds us, so “let us lay aside every weight.”

Again, another unique word to Scripture is seen, *ogkos*. It is a mass, bulk, or encumbrance which causes one to bend from its load. The author is not speaking of physical weights and flabby stomachs though. Rather, he is speaking of spiritual and doctrinal matters. In particular, he has been speaking about the “greater than” nature of Christ throughout the epistle. Worshiping angels instead of Christ would be such a weight. Holding on to the doctrines of the Old Covenant would be such a weight. In fact, Peter, speaking of the law, says this to the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15:10, 11 –

“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

This is exactly what the law is; one big heavy *ogkos*, hindering people from coming to a right relationship with God through the grace provided in Jesus Christ our Lord. All such weight is to be laid aside. Next, the author says, “and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*.”

Another unique word is found here, *euperistatos*. It is a compound word which gives the sense of “well,” “all around,” and “planted.” Thus, “completely encircling” is the idea. Sin, then, is something that encompasses us and keeps us

from being able to move in any direction to get away from it. Wherever we turn, it surrounds us. And so the reader is asked to lay it aside. This includes all sins of a physical nature, but it also surely includes those things which are faulty in a doctrinal sense.

Hebrews 13:9 speaks of “various and strange doctrines.” Anything which is not of God, and which is not revealed as proper in His word, and yet which is taught as a doctrine is “strange.” It is something that is added to the gospel, and it is faulty and comes to encircle a person so that they are caught in the sin of false teaching. The author, after asking to have these things laid aside from our lives says, “and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”

One cannot run with endurance if he carries a heavy burden, and he cannot run with endurance if he is caught in a trap of false doctrine which thoroughly impedes forward motion. The word “race” is from the Greek *agón*. It is the basis for our modern day word “agony.” It is a contest and a struggle which requires endurance and being fully fit to proceed and to win. We have a contest in this life which is to live for Jesus, live in faith, and to press forward with pleasing God and not getting encumbered by faulty doctrine and faithless living. This is what the author exhorts for his reader; and in the next verse, he will give the surest way of all for it to be effected in the believer’s life.

Life application: After speaking for 40 verses on the exceptional faith of biblical characters of the past, “a great cloud of witnesses,” the author has given us a multi-pointed challenge –

- 1) “Let us lay aside every weight.” This is speaking of anything which will affect, withhold, or rob us of our faith. How easy this is too! It can surely affect our faith when we see a false preacher lining his pockets with money and then being caught in gross sin. Understand that this will surely happen from time to time and determine not to let it hinder your walk. The same is true with countless other things which can sidetrack you from strong faith. Think about a show you saw on the TV or YouTube which called into question the truth of the Bible. On every such occasion, the speaker either

failed to do his homework or he has an agenda to bring disrepute on Scripture and to weaken your faith. Know your Bible, know your Lord, and stand strong in your faith.

- 2) “Let us lay aside the sin which so easily ensnares us.” Not only do we need to watch out that other’s sins don’t bring us down, but we need to remember that each of us is susceptible to sin. No sooner do we feel secure in our faith than the devil challenges us with temptation.
- 3) “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” We have been reminded elsewhere that being a faithful Christian is like a race. In a race, one needs to not only start, but to persevere. The only way to make it to the finish line is to focus and not falter.

Dear Heavenly Father! Your word offers challenges which show that our walk in this life is more than just that. And it isn't a mere sprint either. Rather, it is a marathon. Therefore, be with us each step of the way so that we will not be weighed down, that we will not be tripped up, and that we will pass the finish line with satisfaction that we have been pleasing to You in our run! Yes, be with us, O God. Amen.

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

The author now turns to my particular favorite set of words in Scripture by saying, “looking unto Jesus.” The word “looking” is from the compound Greek word *aphoraó*. It is seen only here and in Philippians 2:23, and it signifies, “looking away from all else to fix one’s gaze upon.” It is for this reason, many translations include the word “fix” in one form or another, such as, “simply fixing our gaze upon Jesus” (Weymouth New Testament).

There is a purposeful looking away from all other things in order to direct one's complete and full attention on... JESUS. With such a gaze, there is nothing else which can fill our eyes, and thus our hearts, minds, affections, and desires. To look unto Jesus is to be consumed with Jesus to the exclusion of all else. May it ever be so in our lives!

With this thought in mind, he then describes this wonderful JESUS in order to explain why such a gaze is proper. It is because He is "the author and finisher of *our* faith." Vincent's Word Studies notes that this choice of translation "is misleading, and narrows the scope of the passage." The word "author" comes from the Greek *archégos*. This signifies the first of a long procession. It is "a *file-leader* who pioneers the way for many others to follow." It is then a pioneer leader, or a founding leader. The word is widely translated as "founder," "pioneer," "source," "leader," and so on.

The Greek word translated as, "finisher," is found only here. It is a noun derived from a verb which signifies to bring to an end or to complete. Thus, He is the "Perfecter," "Completer," or "Finisher" of faith. The NKJV inserts the word "our" in the verse, but this brings in a false sense of the meaning. There is actually a definite article before "faith," and so it can rightly be translated as simply "faith," or – more precisely – as "the faith." As Vincent's Word Studies notes – "Not our Christian faith, but faith absolutely, as exhibited in the whole range of believers from Abel to Christ."

With this understood, the author continues with, "who for the joy that was set before Him." This is speaking of the exaltation that was His to possess upon the completion of His work. It is referred to quite a few times in the Bible, and it is revealed in both Testaments. Paul refers to it in Philippians 2 –

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Philippians 2:9-11

This is the “joy” that was set before Jesus, and for which He willingly “endured the cross.” Again, referring to the same thought, Paul spoke of this as well in Philippians 2 –

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

In Paul’s words of Philippians 2:8, there is no article in front of “cross.” It says, “even cross death.” The utterly shameful nature of the death is brought forth in Paul’s choice of words. It shows the enormity of the level of obedience and humility which Christ endured for us. Thus, the author here refers to the “shame” of the cross. Christ was willing to endure this because there was also joy set before Him.

The connection between the first clause and this is not to be missed –

- looking unto Jesus
- who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross

Those who trust in Christ are to look to the JOY set before us, meaning Christ, just as Christ looked to the joy set before Him. No matter what comes forth in our lives, and no matter how shameful it may appear, the PRIZE of Christ is to consume our vision. In this, we will be able to laugh at the minimal, temporary, and inconsequential shame of the present. This, just as Jesus did concerning the cross. It was there, waiting for Him, but in looking beyond that moment, He was “despising the shame.”

Christ looked at what would occur there on the cross with scorn and contempt. Because of the glory which is assigned to the cross today, it is hard for us to grasp what is being said. We look to the cross as the highest fulfillment of God's love for us, and as a badge of honor to be cherished and boasted over (see Galatians 6:14), but the cross was an instrument of death which was a sign of great shame at the time.

To be crucified was something that would bring a sense of horror upon those who were connected to it. Mothers of the crucified would bear the shame, friends of the crucified would not speak of what occurred, those who did the crucifying would revel at their ability to so humiliate another human. But Christ despised this, knowing that something far greater was ahead of him. And so after the cross and the humiliation, He "has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

To "sit down" is to be in a state of repose. Christ accomplished His work, even the work which was deemed to be a shame by the people who crucified Him, but that very work completed His mission of fulfilling the Law of Moses. In fulfillment of the law, a New Covenant was initiated in His blood.

To sit "at the right hand of the throne of God" signifies the position of power and authority. It is not a lesser position, as if God has actual hands and Christ is sitting by one of them. Instead, it is the position of God's complete and absolute power and authority. This was spoken of by Jesus Himself in Matthew 28 –

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.' Amen." Matthew 28:18-20

The word, "name," Jesus used there is in the singular. The three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are one essence. Christ is at the right hand of the throne of God, possessing all of the royalty, authority, power, dignity, and force of the Godhead.

Life application: The almighty and infinitely wise Creator of the universe stepped into the continuum of time and space in the Person of Jesus. He alone has bridged the gap, provided atonement, redeemed lost man, and restored felicity between God and Adam's fallen race. He is the focal point of our worship and the light in our lives. He wrote our faith and He will bring it to perfection. He looked forward to His day of triumph and joy, knowing that the cross with all of its shame and agony lay ahead...and He scorned it!

What is shame? What is agony? What is worth the humiliation of His accusers? The answer is as astounding as it is simple... God loves you so infinitely much that, before He created a single grain of sand, He determined that Jesus would go to the cross and bear the punishment for sin which each of us deserves.

No cost was too high to pay the ransom. No pain was too great to right our wrongs. No disgrace was too shameful to cover our nakedness. And so Christ Jesus endured this for you. And when His mission was complete, He ascended again to the Father with all authority and all power granted to Him.

This is the same authority He possessed from eternity past and which He set aside in order to destroy the work of the devil. The tabernacle of Moses had no chairs because the priests' work was never done. But Jesus Christ, our true High Priest, finished the work His Father sent Him to accomplish. And when He did so... He sat down.

His work is complete and never needs to be repeated. Jesus Christ's atonement is all-sufficient for the salvation of the human soul. Think today on the majesty of God and His great love for you – expressed in the Person and work of JESUS our Lord; God's Messiah.

Heavenly Father, it is right that we ask as David did, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" Of what value are we, even lost in our sins, that You would send Your precious Son, Jesus, to buy us back from this state of death? How terrible was the cost, and yet, how glorious was the work accomplished there! All praise, glory, honor, and power – they are Yours alone. Amen.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Hebrews 12:3

The word "For" is given to explain why he exhorted the reader to fix his gaze upon Jesus. He had said that Christ "endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." With that now understood, the author says, "For consider Him." This is still speaking of Jesus, the subject of what continues to be stated.

We are being encouraged to carefully reflect on the example Christ has provided because (as will be noted in the verses ahead) any one of us is bound to face his own trial in the future. In reflecting on what Christ faced, we can be more fully prepared to handle the challenges that come our own way. Understanding this, he says that it is He "who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself."

The world was, and is, at enmity with Christ because He brings it under conviction of sin. In His perfection, the sin of others is highlighted. This inevitably brought about hostility from sinners. Albert Barnes notes that at the time of Christ's coming, the Jews "opposed his plans, perverted his sayings, and ridiculed his claims."

There was great enmity towards Him, and attacks against Him were common, even to the point of attempting to execute Him in one way or another. It seems that at every turn someone was waiting in the wings to try to either trip Him up, or they were watching to see Him make the slightest mistake in regard to either

the Law of Moses or their own additions to it. Despite this constant barrage of attacks, He stayed the course set before Him, not deviating from the Father's will. It is this example which the author uses in order to say to his audience, "lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."

The Greek reads, "that you may not be wearied in your souls – being faint" (YLT). The idea is that in emulating Christ's example, the believer will be able to endure any such similar attempt to hush him up, trip him up, or redirect him from the proper course of obedience to the Lord. Just as Christ went even to the cross of Calvary to do the Father's will, so we should look at whatever comes our way as just a step on the road to glory. No matter how difficult or disagreeable the trial may be, it is one that our Leader has already been on. Instead of becoming weary and discouraged, we are to be renewed in the strength of the Lord and encouraged to continue on.

Life application: The author is reminding us of a fundamental truth of Christianity. We are not hated because we are violent, or because we destroy the unborn, or because we blow ourselves and others up, or because we are somehow intolerant. Rather, we are hated because we bring the truth concerning the fallen state of man to a world that doesn't want to accept it.

People want to believe that they are in good in and of themselves and, that because of their own righteousness, they are in tight with God. They trust that all the wrong they have done will simply be forgotten because of a few good deeds that they have accomplished in between the innumerable sins of a lifetime. It is hard to face up to the fact that we are really sinful beings, and so the world simply attempts to deny this truth. It is so much easier to live in denial and pray to something – anything – other than an infinitely holy Creator.

This verse reminds us of this so that we won't grow weary, lose heart, and become ineffective in our Christian life. If Jesus received opposition even leading to death, we really should expect no more. If we live a life without this, how wonderful that is. But if we face persecution, torture, or even death, we need to simply accept that Jesus walked that path before us.

Thank you, Lord, for reminding us that not everything in our Christian walk will be fun and prosperity, but rather we should expect hardships, opposition, and trials. Give us the ability to endure whatever comes our way that You alone may be glorified. Amen.

You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. Hebrews 12:4

In the Greek, there is an article which comes before the word sin. Young's translates it as, "Not yet unto blood did ye resist -- with the sin striving." In other words, "sin" is personified here by the author. With this in mind, the verse can be properly evaluated.

The author begins with, "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed." The words are plain and obvious. Others had resisted, even to the point of bloodshed. This includes, in particular, the example of Christ – who is the main Subject of what has been said in the past two verses. However, the reference in verse 1 which speaks of "so great a cloud of witnesses" refers to those in Chapter 11. The author is telling his audience that to this point, they had not faced such a trial as would lead them to bloodshed. From there, he says, "striving against [the] sin."

These words follow the same pattern as those found in 1 Corinthians 9. There, Paul records a race that turns into a form of combat –

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.²⁵ And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*.²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air." 1 Corinthians 9:24-26

Here in Hebrews 12:2, the author speaks of “the race that is set before us.” He now turns to “striving against [the] sin.” It is another good hint that Paul is the author of both epistles.

The question is, “What is the author referring to?” Most commentators would say that this is speaking about resisting others during persecution, even to the point of shedding blood. But what do others have to do with “the sin.” Unless someone is forcing a person to choose to deny the faith, under the pain of punishment or death, it is unlikely talking about general persecution.

Sin, especially when personified, is something that an individual wars against internally. It is true that the previous verse said that Christ “endured such hostility from sinners against Himself,” but the true war that was being waged was against violating the Law of Moses – God’s standard for Israel – in order to prevail over the Law.

He was constantly faced with such challenges, even to the night before the cross where He shed His blood in sweat like great drops of blood. This torturous battle continued on before Israel’s leaders, King Herod, and Pilate. But He endured through each event. He shed His blood in His own agony, and His blood was shed by others who attempted to make Him sin against the law and against His heavenly Father.

In the race set before us, we are admonished to fix our eyes on Jesus who first went through these things, demonstrating that one can prevail over “the sin,” even if it necessitates the shedding of blood. Our ordeals in facing this foe may seem great, but Christ met him and prevailed over him.

Life application: The author was originally writing to first century Jewish believers who were considering returning to temple worship, most likely for security and safety from persecution. This persecution was certainly increasing as the Jewish believers and non-believers began to become more and more distinct.

The entire book of Hebrews is written to demonstrate the “greater than” nature of Christ in His many roles – Prophet, Priest, King, Lawgiver, etc. By turning back to temple worship, they would be moving from a greater to a lesser. In addition to this, the author reminded them that it is “not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Yes, there is a still struggle with sin, but he makes it perfectly clear that all sin is completely atoned for by Christ Jesus’ sacrifice, whereas the temple sacrifices were temporary and passing away.

In their daily lives and “striving against [the] sin,” they hadn’t faced such great trials that they had “yet” shed their blood. By saying this, he was comparing them with Jesus who had. He faced opposition and eventually the cross, and He became the great example for each believer to follow – even to the point of death. Remember, all of this follows on the heels of Chapter 11 which noted the faith and perseverance of past believers. Prior to that in Chapter 10, the recipients were reminded of their own faithfulness in their earlier years.

As is evident, the author is masterfully preparing them for the long haul by looking back to the past. By doing so, he is giving them the much-needed confidence they would need for the increasingly hard road which lay ahead. In the end, the imperative to fix our eyes on Jesus still stands today. If we can remember those simple words, all else will always find its proper place.

Lord, it is our honest desire to follow You no matter what lies ahead. Thank You for the logical, orderly, and uplifting way in which Your word builds us up in the ability to accomplish this. Let us never lose sight of that which is most important – following Jesus’ example no matter what the cost. Amen.

**And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:
“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; Hebrews 12:5**

Along with the books of Moses, the Hebrew audience would have been rather familiar with the Psalms and the Proverbs. In this verse, the author rebukes his audience by saying, “And you have forgotten that word of encouragement...” He then goes on to quote Proverbs 3:11 –

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor detest His correction.”

Here, the words are rendered, “And you have forgotten this word of encouragement,” Some translations render it as a question, “And have you completely forgotten...?” Either way, the idea is that they have let it escape their memory that the Lord is, in fact, with them – even in times of trial. In the previous verse, he said, “In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”

The intent of his words, then, is that in their struggle against sin, the Lord may send discipline; but it is meant as a means of tender reminder and of correction, not condemnation. This is seen with the words, “as a father addresses his son.”

When a father corrects his son, it is a correction for his good, and which is intended to bring out positive effects in him. It is true that not all fathers are good fathers, but this is a general statement. If the model for a father is to correct a son positively, then we can expect that the Lord, who is the Father par excellence, will always do so in a positive way when dealing with His own children.

The proverb itself begins with, “My son.” This was Solomon speaking as a father to his own son, or as Solomon as the head of the people of the land speaking to all in a broad way. Either way, it is an example of how they should perceive the

treatment they receive. Thus, it is ultimately a truth which can be applied to how the Lord treats his sons. This is why the author explains it as such in verse 12:7.

Therefore, because of this, the proverb continues with, “do not despise the chastening of the Lord.” The word translated as “despise” means to treat something lightly. It is found only here in Scripture, and it gives the sense of holding that thing in low esteem.

Rather than this, when such a time comes, instead of despising it, we should demonstrate wisdom and say, “I am the one who deserves this, and I am the one who needs to learn from it.” In such, there will be an acceptance of the Lord’s hand of correction. As it says, “do not detest His correction.”

The word “detest” means “to grow weary,” or even “faint.” Instead of growing weary of the Lord’s hand of correction, we are to be encouraged and reinvigorated by it. It is as if we are to take the Lord’s correction as if He is saying, “That’s the wrong way. Try again... you can do it!” Each seemingly unhappy occurrence is actually a chance to push us forward in a positive way, knowing that He is doing these things for our own good.

Life application: Interestingly, the Lord (Jesus) is equated with God in the author’s current train of thought and yet back in verse 12:2 he said that Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” As noted then, the right hand does not mean a different physical location. Rather, it indicates the position of authority. The math is pretty easy here – 1) Jesus carries all the authority of God; 2) the Lord (Jehovah as is evidenced from the Proverb) is called God; therefore, 3) Jesus is Jehovah God.

This isn’t an unusual pattern that could somehow be misconstrued. Rather, it has been the common practice of the author throughout the book of Hebrews. It is a pattern we have encountered numerous times already. When you call on Jesus, you are now God’s son through adoption, hence this verse here is applicable to all believers.

If the world is beating you up, take time to think on this. God loves you as His precious child. Though you may be disciplined, He will never take His love or His favor from you. Keep this in mind and know that He has a good plan and purpose set aside just for you.

Lord, it is often hard for us to think of ourselves as Your children. Things often seem harder than we can bear. But Your word says that because of our faith in Christ Jesus, we are, in fact, Your children. Be with us and help us through the difficulties we face. And we will remember to give You the praise and worship You deserve. Hear our hearts, and lead us according to Your wisdom. Amen.

**For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.” Hebrews 12:6**

Here we have the continuation of the thought which started in the preceding verse. In verse 12:6, the author cited Proverbs 3:11. Now, he cites Proverbs 3:12 –

“For whom the Lord loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.”

The verse doesn't give any qualifiers, but rather simply says, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens.” Therefore, it can be taken as a given that this is a truth which is applied to all true believers. This doesn't mean an arbitrary punishment or one that was not deserved. Rather, it is a fatherly correction of wrongdoing in order to lead those He loves – meaning those who are in Christ and beloved of the Father – to a right walk before Him.

What is implied is that every person who is in Christ is still not perfected, but is prone to error. No believer can say they have attained a state of sinless perfection in this life. As we are not sinless, when we err, the Lord will chasten us *because* He

loves us. The stress is on the fact that the Lord truly loves us, and so He chastens. Further, the author says, “And scourges every son whom He receives.”

The Greek word for “scourge” speaks of flogging a person who is strapped to a pole. It is a punishment that literally draws blood. This choice of wording is surely given as a connection to verse 4, which said, “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed.” Though this may be the case, the Lord will figuratively draw blood in His correction of His children. This is because such severe pain will be in the best interests of His children. That which is eternal is seen by God, and it is that which He is concerned about. As it says, this scourging is intended for those “whom He receives.”

The word used here indicates to receive with personal interest. God is looking for the best result in those whom He brings this type of discipline to. He has a personal interest in receiving us in the most readied and developed state possible. Every one of us will receive our chastening differently, based on the desired outcome, but each person can expect such a chastening.

Life application: If you are under the hand of the Lord’s discipline, it may seem counterintuitive, but you should actually rejoice. There is an immense difference between the Lord’s discipline and the Lord’s wrath. As saved believers, we will never face the Lord’s wrath. However, as we turn from Him we can surely expect His discipline. And the reason is because He loves us. In fact, He disciplines us not as a wayward student, or a straying employee, but as one of His own children.

The theme of being God’s child through adoption permeates the New Testament and confirms that we once were just the opposite. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:3 we “were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” As hard as it may be for people to accept, man without Jesus is at enmity with God. There are only two possible relationships with Him – either you are a child of wrath, or you are a child of God’s love and affection. Take this to heart and be thankful when you face the Lord’s discipline. John jubilantly exclaims –

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” 1 John 3:1

To be chastised by God is to be His legitimate child and accepted as a son. Truly, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! Hallelujah and Amen!

Thank You, Lord, for the times of discipline! Even though they may seem painful at the moment, surely they demonstrate Your great love for us because You are correcting us as children, not punishing us as enemies. Thank You for the bonds of family which can never separate us from Your love and grace. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? Hebrews 12:7

The author has cited the Proverbs in order to establish the fact that believers can, and should, expect discipline simply because they are loved as children. Now, as an encouragement for that time when it comes, he says, “If you endure chastening.” In this, he is mentally preparing his audience concerning a logical reason why the discipline is forthcoming, and how to consider it when it does, in fact, come.

There are two ways of considering the word “endure” here. The first would be, “If you persevere through chastening.” The sense would be “to bear up under correction.” The second would be “If you receive chastening.” The sense would be “for the reason of correction.” The latter is correct. The purpose of chastening here is for God’s discipline.

As this is so, the author then confirms that in such discipline, “God deals with you as with sons.” In that is found the tie in with the words of the Proverbs. The very fact that discipline has come is because God looks at those who are His as His own children. This is confirmed several times in Paul’s writings, such as, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).

As those who are in Christ are considered sons, the discipline they receive should be considered a mark of love, not an act of wrath. This is certain, because he finishes with, “for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”

It is an obvious truth that when a father loves his child, he will discipline him for good. It is true, a perverse man will arbitrarily mistreat his children, but that is not under consideration here. The Lord is as a Father to his children, a perfect Father. Thus, His children should be grateful for times of discipline. Of course, it may not be a happy event while it is occurring, but it is a sign of the Lord’s care of those He loves to so chasten them. The author will continue with this line of thought, summing it up in verse 11. He is letting believers know, in advance, that they can take comfort in being corrected.

Life application: For the past couple of verses, the Lord’s discipline upon his sons has been mentioned. The question then is, “How can we tell the difference between His discipline and something else?” It is a valid question and not directly addressed here or elsewhere. For this reason, the author, in essence, says to “endure hardship as discipline...” Got it? Whatever trials you face, whatever hardships, whatever seems to be robbing you of joy – consider it discipline. The exact same things may be common to all people. The difference then is that our hardships are meant to refine us as children of God. This same concept is addressed by James, the Lord’s brother –

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4

Thus, our trials indicate that “God is treating you as sons.” These develop perseverance and that in turn leads to becoming a complete and mature Christian.

Understandably, many faithful Christians – maybe even you – are going through almost insurmountable trials. You may have a wayward child, financial difficulties, a spouse who is unfaithful, or even a combination of these. Rather than following what would seem logical and crying out, “Why me Lord?” you can try to find the Lord’s hand, even in these things.

Although the trial remains, understanding that this is developing your character may help you to keep it in proper perspective. And don’t carry the burden alone. Talk to God as your Father and cast your cares on Him – for He cares for you.

Sovereign Lord, you have determined the time, place, and situation in which we find ourselves. You know even the most intimate and difficult trials we face. Thank You for them if they will but bring You honor and develop us as Your children. In Jesus’ name we pray because it is in Jesus that we have become Your children. Amen.

But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Hebrews 12:8

The author now turns to a set reason for the Father’s chastening. In this, He says, “But.” This is to contrast what was just said –

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? **8** But...”

With the contrast firmly set, he then says, “if you are without chastening.” In essence –

If you endure chastening, X is to be understood.
But if you are without chastening, Y is to be understood.

With this understood, the author continues with, “of which all have become partakers.” The words, “of which,” are speaking of the chastening. In not receiving such correction, the author makes it understood that “you are illegitimate and not sons.”

To be overlooked in correction when correction is due, is how a person would treat an illegitimate son. Such a child has been abandoned by his father, and he is living outside of his care, correction, and upbringing. He goes unrecognized by the father. And this is how those who are not in Christ are treated. If bad things come their way, they cannot say that it is God’s chastening for correction. It is simply time and circumstance, or it might be God’s judgment, but it is not a corrective measure. Until a person comes to God through Christ, they are not considered in the family of God.

Life application: After the previous verse where it says, “God deals with you as with sons,” when you are disciplined, the writer today uses common logic. If your father doesn’t discipline you, then you’re an illegitimate child.

There is an obvious exception which would be a father who refuses to discipline an unruly child. However, the Bible uses the example of a proper and loving father when making a comparison to God. A father who refuses to discipline a child is an immoral example to his children and those who see him. Such a father is sure to raise a child with no morals, who is spoiled, and who will be a problem to society.

God, however, is the perfect Father and will never leave sin or haughtiness in one of His children unattended. The reason should be obvious – just as an unruly or disobedient child brings discredit upon his earthly father, Christians who act in a like manner bring discredit upon God.

A person who continually runs through marriages and yet claims to be a Christian is a poor reflection on God. Likewise, a saved believer who spends his hours at a bar or gambling casino gives those around him a reason to mock God. Paul uses this logic in Romans 2 –

“You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’ as it is written.” Romans 2:22-24

Here, Paul was quoting Isaiah 52:5. God’s name resided on the Hebrew believers, but their actions brought discredit upon Him. Nothing has changed and our actions today, likewise, need to be carefully considered lest we diminish His glory in the site of unbelievers.

Lord, Holy is Your name. May we be perceived as children of obedience so that Your name may be glorified among non-believers. And may our actions cause them to look inward and determine that they too should desire to be a part of Your covenant people – sons through adoption because of faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? Hebrews 12:9

The word “Furthermore” is given to extend the thought of what has already been presented. The author has brought in the subject of being chastened by God, and this has been equated to the chastening of a human father. In both, the child is being treated as a son, not an illegitimate.

But more than that, when our human fathers corrected us, did we turn around and say, “You had no right to do that?” Unless the person is utterly depraved, such would not be the case. Instead, he would learn the intended lesson and pay respect to the parent. Otherwise, the correction will not only be repeated, but it will certainly be intensified. Only a dolt would not quickly learn this and submit to the rule and instruction of his father.

With that understanding, the author rhetorically asks, “Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?”

Here the word *mallon* is used. It is a common word used throughout the New Testament. Paul used it in Romans 5 four times. It involves a prioritization or ranking of matters in order to elevate what is better over what is simply good. It was good that our human fathers corrected us, but that was accomplished in the sphere of a family unit comprised of fallen beings who are prone to all kinds of error. Correction may have come to the wrong child. It may not have actually been needed over a matter, and yet it was given out. The correction may have been more, or less, than what was appropriate. It may have been carried out in anger. And so on.

However, in God, the correction is precisely handed out in a perfect manner according to the situation. There is no error in what occurs, and it is exactly what is needed for us to stop and consider our need for coming closer to Him, not

further drawing away Him. The only fallible part of the equation will be our response to what occurs, not to how He has handled His part of the matter.

But if we are wise, we will consider that what happened between each of us and our earthy father should be even more precisely handled when the correction comes from our heavenly Father. His is the sphere of the Creator, the One who breathed life into man, who has ordained all things in perfection, and who sustains all things with perfect control. When we consider our lives, and the events which occur in them – as given to us by God – we should be all the more in “subjection to the Father of spirits.”

His sphere is as the One which handles all spirits with the eternal perspective in mind. As we are destined to an eternal walk in His presence, our submission to Him brings, as the author says, life. To “live” isn’t merely speaking of salvation. It is speaking of the here and now. Our lives are true lives when they are lived in accord with the will of the Father. God desires that we live out that true life now, and to allow it to be an anticipatory stepping stone to the life which lies yet ahead.

Life application: A father who properly disciplines his child is respected. Not only out of fear (at the time of punishment), but out of love and appreciation later. Anyone who remembers discipline, which was handed out for real mistakes, learned that it came because of love and a desire to direct to what is proper. The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about discipline and it doesn’t shy away from it. Unlike modern day thinking, corporal punishment is recommended for children who misbehave –

“He who spares his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” Proverbs 13:24

&

“Do not withhold correction from a child,
For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

¹⁴ You shall beat him with a rod,
And deliver his soul from hell.” Proverbs 23:13, 14

Rather than being inappropriate, it is correct to discipline our children. The type of punishment needs to meet the level of misdeed. And when it does, respect – not fear – is the result. In addition to respect we gain a proper moral compass which will last us throughout our lives. Likewise, when the Lord disciplines us, it is for our growth. Rather than being upset and accusing God for our displeasure, we need to thank Him for the loving instruction He’s providing us. Remember these things and when trials or troubles come, thank Him for them. He is revealing His great love for you.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the Bible’s lessons on discipline! There have been times when we have not understood all the difficulties we have faced. And even now, when we face hardship help us to know that it is molding us into Your glorious image. Because of this, give us the patience and the heart to accept it as faithful children – obedient even as our Lord Jesus was. Amen.

For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Hebrews 12:10

The author now continues with his thought of chastening for correction and the expected outcome of that action. In this, he begins with, “For they indeed for a few days.” The intent of these words is the contrasting of what is temporary and of that which is eternal.

A father has the ability to chasten a child for a set period of time. In relation to a human lifespan, it may be one fifth, or even up to one third, of the person’s life that the son is corrected as a youth. And even after the teenage years, a father can continue to correct his son through various means. But even if that continued through until the father’s death, it is still mere “days” in relation to the eternal

nature of God. And the positive effects of the father's chastening will hopefully continue throughout the life of the child, but that life is but a breath compared to the positive effects which come from God's hand of correction –

“For all our days have passed away in Your wrath;
We finish our years like a sigh.

¹⁰ The days of our lives *are* seventy years;
And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years,
Yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

¹¹ Who knows the power of Your anger?
For as the fear of You, *so is* Your wrath.

¹² So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:9-12

Understanding this, the author continues by saying that our human fathers “chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them.” Human fathers may do the best with the circumstances which surround them; but they have limited knowledge, they have limited ability to process any situation and how it will lead to future events, they have limitations on their ability to correctly handle their emotions, and so forth. They can only act within very limited parameters in relation to the situation, but they must act. And so they do as seems best at the moment.

In contrast to this, and speaking of God, he says, “but He for *our* profit.” The human parent will normally act in a manner which has a positive intent for the child, aiming for what is best for him, even if something negative arises out of his chastening. On the contrary, God knows exactly what will be one hundred percent profitable for His children when He chastens them. There is no “best guess.” Rather, there is perfection of action. The author says this knowing that God cannot err in any way, and thus His correction is so “that we may be partakers of His holiness.”

The intended outcome is geared completely towards this end. The correction we receive from God's hand will never lead us to a lesser state of holiness. Instead,

what occurs is perfectly brought upon us for an exacting and precise outcome. The thing for us to contemplate, then, is that – as children of God – our lives are being directed in the most perfect manner possible for our time and circumstances. If we can truly accept this, then we can know that those things which seem out of control are actually under complete control. This leads to the peace that passes all understanding. God has it all under control.

Life application: Parenting doesn't come with an operating manual – as any parent knows. Books written to help parents through tough times often come with contradictory messages and even good ones don't cover all circumstances. And so we discipline our children “for a few days” as we think best. However, because of our own faulty morals and limited knowledge of both present and future repercussions, we often blow it and make things worse.

Because of this, we can then fly to the opposite extreme and fail to discipline at all – thus making things worse in a different way. Also, because of our inner desire to protect our children, we will often decide on a lesser punishment simply because we don't want to hurt them or break their hearts. Isn't it complicated? They steal a cookie and we go through a huge dilemma of trying to decide how to handle it!

God, however, is the perfect administrator of justice. For those who haven't called on Jesus, one type of punishment will be handed out – eternal condemnation. But for His sons through adoption, God disciplines us for our good in order that we may share in His holiness.

When we suffer hardships or trials, we may often be confused as to whether it is God's correction or just time and circumstance. In either case, we should consider it God's providential correction and accept it with gratitude. By accepting our situations this way, we learn to share in his holiness. Just as Jesus accepted the reviling, persecution, jeers, and eventually crucifixion from His people, we too should accept what comes our way. Jesus, though not needing correction, still accepted the trials to show us how we too should live.

Lord God, if receiving Your hand of discipline means sharing in Your holiness, then let it come. To Your glory alone. Amen.

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:11

The author just spoke of the chastening of our human fathers, and then contrasted that with chastening which comes from the Lord. Now he begins with, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present." The Greek more correctly reads, "All chastening...does not seem." The negative should be tied to "seem," not "chastening." In this, it is speaking of both human and divine chastening. Whatever kind of chastening (all types) are looked at as a downer when received.

In fact, the point of it is for correction of something that is amiss, and it is a type of discipline which is not expected to be enjoyed. It is in the reception of that which is negative that we are to learn to not repeat the things which were wrong in the first place. That is the entire point of chastening instead of positive encouragement. It is not to be joyful, "but painful." By its very nature, we are to learn from the negative which is brought upon us. With this understood, the author then says, "nevertheless."

The word is given to set the coming words in a contrast to what has just been stated. The Greek word is a weak adversative particle which simply means "but," "on the other hand," etc. The author has presented the truth concerning the negative immediate effects of chastening, but now he shows the positive long-term effects that are intended to come about because of it by saying, "afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

Fruit is something that takes a given amount of time to come about. A tree may not be doing so well, and it isn't bearing a good harvest. In order to bring about a more productive plant, fertilizer may be added, the tree may be pruned, and so on. The pruning itself may seem to hurt the tree (something which appears

negative on the surface to one who doesn't understand the purpose of pruning), but in time, the tree starts producing more flowers, those turn into buds, then into fruit, and a hugely more productive tree – with a much larger harvest – is finally realized. This is what the author is saying concerning chastening.

There is a seemingly unhappy beginning to the process which may deny the one being chastened peace, but from it, there comes “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” which comes “to those who have been trained by it.” Those who take the chastening to heart, and apply its negative effects to their life in a positive way, will be the better off for it in the end. This is what Solomon was referring to in Proverbs –

“Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of correction will drive it far from him.” Proverbs 22:15

Life application: In reading this verse, we might say, “What an understatement!” No one in their right mind likes a good spanking or having their privileges revoked for being disobedient. Even a spanking that doesn't hurt the body still hurts the feelings. But when we get disciplined, we learn to not do whatever wrong thing we did. It sets a guide for future actions.

If the guide is based on proper chastening, then our actions will be morally aligned in a proper way. If the guide is based on unreasonable anger or simply because the parent is taking his or her frustrations out on the child, the effects can lead to emotional or moral problems.

When the discipline that is meted out is in love and for the child's betterment, it will produce “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” When tough moral issues come along later in life, there will be no question about the proper course to take. Likewise, when God disciplines us for our waywardness, He expects a positive result based on His loving hand of correction upon us.

Whatever trials or hardships you are facing, as long as you keep them in the proper perspective, you will see that God is correcting you for a specific reason. It may not be readily apparent, but a day will come when you will understand all that occurred and the great wisdom of the trial. You will be better set for handling future trials in both your life and in helping others through their difficulties. And, above all, you will be molded more and more into the image of Christ. When He comes, there will be far less loss and far more gain in your eternal rewards. Think on this and know that every trial is there for a good end – from an infinitely wise and loving Father.

Lord, help us to understand why we face life's trials, hardships, and corrections, and give us the ability to rejoice in them – knowing that they are indeed producing a harvest of righteousness and peace in our lives. This is what Your word tells us, and so help us to remember it when the times of trouble come. Amen.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,
Hebrews 12:12

The word, “Therefore,” is referring to the entire section concerning chastening. When one is chastened he will be bowed down in the shame of his chastening, weakened by the correction, and in need of restoration to a stronger state. This is the purpose of chastening. It is to bring the person to a desire to perform properly in the future. And so the author then says, “strengthen the hands which hang down.”

The word here is *anorthoó*. It is the third and final time it is seen in the Bible. The first time it was seen was in Luke 13:13 –

“And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”

The word comes from two roots. The first is *ana*, which signifies “up.” The second word is *orthoó*. One can see a hint of the root for orthopedics or orthodontist. It signifies to straighten or correct. The hands which were limp or clenched in anguish are to be straightened out and prepared for work. They are to be strengthened to accomplish the tasks for which the chastening was intended. This will keep the individual from pursuing those things which his correction was to lead him from.

Next, the author says, “and the feeble knees.” After a person is bowed down from his chastening, he is to straighten up. The person is weakened by the correction, and now he is to strengthen himself. His knees are to be ready to support him once again for setting out on the proper path, and for the remainder of the race set before him. In other words, this verse takes the reader right back to verse 12:1

–

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

The chastening which comes from God is intended to bring a person to the place where this is possible.

Life application: The author may have had Ezekiel 7:17 on his mind when he wrote out the words of this verse in Hebrews –

“Every hand will be feeble,
And every knee will be *as weak as water.*” Ezekiel 7:17

The judgment and wrath of God were being poured out on the people because of their faithlessness and detestable practices. Because of this, there was no hope for strengthening, but rather the hands went limp and the knees weakened completely. On the contrary, the author of Hebrews is saying that rather than

wrath and judgment, Christian believers merely face discipline. This discipline is to strengthen us rather than weaken us. If we simply pay attention to what God is trying to teach us, we will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace. And if we don't, then we will inevitably face our own disaster and loss.

God gives us the choice to follow Him faithfully or to wander and stray. However, as has been noted many times thus far in Hebrews, one will never lose their salvation. The Christian is secure in that promise from God. But how sad many believers will be when they meet Christ face to face and realize the life they wasted in empty pursuit rather than living for Him. Determine today that you will spend your life and your efforts in bringing glory to Him.

Lord God, surely we all need to strengthen ourselves and get about Your business. Give us the ability and the desire to be faithful and honorable followers of Christ Jesus all the days of our lives. To Your glory alone we pray. Amen.

...and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Hebrews 12:13

The author continues with the thought of verse 12, which implored the reader to “strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.” He now continues with, “and make straight paths for your feet.”

Here we have a proverb that was on the author's mind. What he says here in the first clause is a close quote to the Greek translation of Proverbs 4:26, 27 –

“Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.
²⁷ Do not turn to the right or the left;
Remove your foot from evil.”

The word translated as “path” is unique in Scripture, it is *trochia*, a noun signifying the track of a wheel. That, in turn, comes from, *trochos*, another noun signifying a wheel. A wheel is something that moves around a central axis, and thus one gets the sense of a “moral axis,” on which our lives turn. Thus, it is the way of life of a person. This is how James uses that word in James 3:6. This is certainly what is on the author’s mind. He is imploring the reader to be on a morally proper track. This is then united with the word *orthos*, or straight.

This word, *orthos*, is then being given as a metaphor for being morally right and virtuous. There is a reason for having such straight paths “for your feet,” which is “so that what is lame may not be dislocated.”

In this, the words, “for your feet,” indicate the walk of life. It is a common metaphor used by Paul. One can walk with God and in accord with His word, or one can walk contrary to Him and His word. But in being morally upright, the movement of the feet will “not be dislocated.” The Greek word for “dislocated” gives the sense of turning aside or wandering away from something. In this sense though, the connection to the body is that it not be put out of joint. If that should occur, then a person’s walk would be hindered. But the idea is of wholeness of body. This is then seen in the last words of the verse. Instead of being put out of joint, they will “rather be healed.”

With straight paths of moral uprightness, instead of being dislocated and falling apart, the person will come to a point of full restoration and spiritual health. The entire thought of verse 12 & 13 speaks of the physical condition of the man, but it points to moral truths –

strengthen the hands which hang down

[strengthen] the feeble knees

make straight paths for your feet

what is lame may not be dislocated

- but rather be healed.

This is all given, as noted in the commentary of verse 12, based on the idea of the race set before us noted in verse 1. In acting in a morally right way, and in keeping ourselves fit and ready for the race, we can then “run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Life application: In regards to the proverb cited above, one sure way to cause worse injury to a wounded knee is to take a path that isn't level or firm. And surely if you deviate from the path, your foot is bound to find even more trouble. On the same lines, is another proverb which teaches us to use discretion in order to not listen to misapplied wisdom –

*“Like the legs of the lame that hang limp
Is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” Proverbs 26:7*

As you can see, the Bible is using physical troubles to make spiritual applications in our lives. By understanding these proverbs, we can look to, and understand, God's wisdom. He created us, and He knows how the two applications – physical and spiritual – demonstrate His wisdom. He is familiar with every physical aspect of our makeup. And so, in making moral applications from our physical attributes, He is revealing how to be morally perfect, just as He is. This is in accord with how to be physically fit and ready for an earthly walk that is trouble-free.

Lord, as You created us, You can readily use examples we understand from our physical bodies to guide us to higher truths in our spiritual lives. Help us to understand such passages in Your word so that we too can have wisdom and insight into such things which You found important enough to include there. In this, we will be both physically sound and morally upright as we walk before You. Amen.

Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: Hebrews 12:14

The author has just finished the thought of having oneself strengthened in body, and set in their paths in order to meet a set purpose. That purpose was noted as being tied into the race set before us which was recorded in verse 12:1. On that race, and with our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, the believer is admonished to “Pursue peace with all *people*.”

This thought is explained elsewhere in the epistles, such as Romans 14 –

“Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” Romans 14:19

Paul repeats and builds on that in 2 Timothy 2:22 as well. In this, the word “people” is inserted. It simply says, “Pursue peace with all.” In this, it is obvious that it is speaking not merely of persecutors, nor merely of those in the church who may be forming rival factions, but of all people in all contexts. For persecutors, it is to be as a witness to them. For believers, it is to be one of harmony within the body leading to contentment without strife. From there, the author says, “and holiness.”

The word signifies “the process of making or becoming holy, set apart, sanctification, holiness, consecration” (Strong’s). Some translations prefer the word “sanctification” here. That is probably the better idea. It is an active pursuit of sanctifying oneself in order to be holy. However, if one pursues holiness, it is because of the sanctification process. One looks to the work in getting to the goal, the other looks to the goal while understanding that a process is required in order to attain it.

With that understanding, he says that “without which no one will see the Lord.” Again, the same thought applies here. Without being sanctified as holy, no one will see the Lord, and so the translation could go either way. Sanctification is the process; holiness is the goal. We are to work to be set apart.

However, as noted elsewhere, the author is not saying that we must do the work in order to see the Lord. He is simply making a statement of fact. “Without holiness no person shall see the Lord.” This is why we are to sanctify ourselves in our lives. But this does not negate that we are already sanctified by Christ. There is a positional sanctification which took place when we received Jesus. That is what allows us to see the Lord. There is also a progressive sanctification which we should pursue in this life. In essence –

*We are sanctified and made holy through Christ. Therefore, let us live out our lives in sanctification leading to holiness for Christ.

Life application: The theme of God’s holiness is revealed throughout Scripture, but it is particularly highlighted in Leviticus, Isaiah, and Hebrews. Depending on the stem of the Hebrew word *qadosh*, the word “holy” will normally mean set apart or consecrated, or it will mean to show oneself sacred or majestic. What the author is telling us is that we are to be set apart from the stain of sin in the world. We are not to remove ourselves from the world as monks and other ascetics have done over the centuries. Jesus Himself – the Holy One incarnate – walked among us, ate with sinners, and never attempted to stay away from fallen man. Rather, He kept Himself set apart from what people did, not from the people. He lived at peace with those around Him and we should as well.

This does not in any way mean that we are to not call sin what it is. Jesus called out the hypocrites, the unrepentant, and the arrogant without hesitation. We should not feel any less angry at the sins of such people. Sin is an offense against God, and it should be considered offensive to us as well.

When we come to God through Christ, we are set apart because of our faith. In response to that gift, we should continue to make every effort to increase in holiness all our days. Remember these things as you go out into the world today. You are set apart. Live that way for the sake of the name of Jesus.

Lord Jesus, forgive me for often failing to be holy and set apart to You. Forgive me for not being angry at sin the way that I should be. Give me the ability to see sin as You see it so that I may never condone it. I know this will lead me to holiness and to a state which pleases You. This I ask in Your beautiful name. Amen.

...looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;
Hebrews 12:15

The author just admonished his readers to “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” The verb was active and imperative. He now continues with that by saying, “looking carefully.” It is a present participle, active. “You are to do this and continue doing it. Keep looking carefully!” And there is a reason for this. The reader is to continue observing the body “lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.”

The verb is, again, a present participle, active. It more rightly says, “lest anyone be falling short of the grace of God.” This isn’t speaking of someone who has become a believer and who has apostatized and thus lost his salvation. Rather, it is speaking of someone who has been saved and is in the continued process of not matching his life with the grace he has received.

In other words, it is someone who is failing to do what is said in the previous verse. He is not pursuing the peace or holiness to which he has been called. Nothing is said of losing his salvation. It is simply one failing to live up to that

salvation. Those in the church should be looking carefully for such a failing “lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble.”

The verb here is, again, a present participle, active. A root is something out of sight. It is buried and not something we even think about. But with water and the right conditions, the germination process takes place, and the root begins to sprout. Likewise, within the church, there may be one who fails to pursue peace and holiness. The bad root begins to come alive and it perniciously begins to produce a bitter plant which causes trouble. From there, the result is obvious. The author says, “and by this many become defiled.”

It is exactly what Paul warns about in his epistles, and it is what is warned about by the other apostles as well. Paul gives the remedy for someone who springs up in this manner in 1 Corinthians 5, saying, “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

In that Chapter, Paul doesn't question the person's salvation. In fact, he argues for it. But he understood what having such a person remain among the congregation would do to the health of the body. The same idea is seen here. The author is looking out for the good of all by having all be on the lookout, at all times, for any action which would disturb the peace of the body, or which lacks holiness within the body.

Life application: Being around a bitter person is like putting a bitter herb in a pot of stew. Everything gets tainted. And so it is in church bodies, our families, and with our social contacts. When a bitter person is allowed to influence the party, the party is ruined. Isaiah actually marks bitterness in a person as one of the great sins of existence –

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;

Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;

Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” Isaiah 5:20

Just as a person who calls evil good, so is the person who takes what should be sweet (Christian fellowship for example) and makes it bitter. Be wary of your own heart and watch for bitterness in others lest it cause trouble and by it many become defiled.

Thank You Lord that the reminders in Your word are so helpful in our daily walk. Keep our thoughts attuned to Your grace and how we should live in response to it. Also, keep us from bitterness which defiles. May we be a pure and holy people, set apart for Your use. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

...lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. Hebrews 12:16

The author continues now with examples of a person becoming defiled which was mentioned in the previous verse. He gives two examples, which are connected in one thought in this translation. It probably should separate them by saying, “lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person like Esau.” Only the word “profane” should be tied to Esau, unless the author is tying Esau’s selling of his birthright in with the thought of selling himself off as if a prostitute. That would be highly unusual to speak of him in this way.

What seems more likely is that, as is consistent in the epistles, sexual immorality is being condemned. Such actions are not holy, and they bring defilement upon a person. Assuming it is a separate category, he then introduces the “profane person like Esau.”

Esau is frowned upon in Scripture, and his failings are noticeable even from a cursory read of the Bible. But even more, his descendants after him would continue to be a problem. This all started with Esau’s negative attitude about what is important. As the author says of him, “who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.”

The account is found in Genesis 25. He was hungry, and he gave up his honored birthright for a simple bowl of stew. This led to other problems in his life, but all of this was known in advance. When the twins were in their mother's womb, she received a prophecy about the futures of these two sons –

“Two nations *are* in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger.” Genesis 23:23

This is how it came to be in the history of their descendants. But, of note, is the blessing pronounced upon Esau later –

“Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth,
And of the dew of heaven from above.
⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live,
And you shall serve your brother;
And it shall come to pass, when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck.” Genesis 27:39, 40

Isaac prophesied that Esau would break Jacob's yoke from his neck. What this means is rather involved. In short, the yoke of Jacob is the Law of Moses. Speaking of the descendants of Edom (who is Esau), known as the Idumeans in the New Testament times, we find in the writings of the Jewish Historian Josephus that about 129 BC John Hyrcanus –

“...subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and of the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews.”

In other words, the descendants of Esau were assimilated into Israel, and they came under the Law (the yoke) of Moses – which Jacob’s descendants were under. Eventually, these people (meaning the Jews who included the converted Idumeans) were exiled for having rejected Christ. However, at a point future to us now, they will cast off this yoke, come to Christ, and be saved.

Israel is back in the land, and the ancient prophecies of these two men and their descendants are ready to be fulfilled in their entirety.

Life application: What is of value to you? A person may be the manager of a large corporation and make millions of dollars a year, and another person from his school may be a blue-collar worker. When they get together from time to time, the millionaire may brag about his house, cars, and vacations. The blue-collar worker, however, brags about the Lord in his life. Which of the two is in the more favorable position? In the end, there is only one thing that truly matters. Why sell off that which is of the highest value for a bowl of soup? The things of this world will all perish. But Christ, and His love for those He has redeemed, will go on forever. Come to Christ and be granted the greatest Gift of all!

Lord, help us to learn from the lessons we read in the Bible. Help us to see the importance of a life which is dedicated to You, and then to hold fast to that, applying it to our lives and never deviating from Your precepts. Everything else is temporary and it will pass away. But Your word, O God, is eternal. May we hold fast to it now and forever. Amen.

For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. Hebrews 12:17

This refers to Esau and what is said of him in the previous verse –

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

Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of red soup. After this, Isaac wanted to bless Esau before his death (the blessing and the birthright are not the same occasion, but the importance of them in the lives of the sons is connected by the surrounding circumstances). In his desire to bless him, Isaac asked Esau to prepare a meal of wild game. While Esau was out hunting, Jacob came in by deception (Isaac was blind) and received the blessing.

No sooner had Isaac blessed Jacob than Esau came in with the meal he had prepared, expecting to be blessed. However, that was no longer possible. As Isaac said to him concerning Jacob, “I have blessed him—*and* indeed he shall be blessed” (Genesis 27:33). The blessing came upon Jacob, and Esau “was rejected.”

The Lord had rejected the line of Esau, just as Esau had rejected his birthright. Though this was known to the Lord even before it occurred, it still had to be played out in the stream of time. After Isaac’s statement, Esau’s reaction came in a mournful cry –

“When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me—me also, O my father!’” Genesis 27:34

This is what the author of Hebrews refers to when he says, “though he sought it diligently with tears,” but the context of the author’s words is that the tearful plea was rejected, “for he found no place for repentance.”

This is a phrase unique in Scripture. To understand what it means, one must understand the meaning of “repentance.” It simply means, “to change one’s mind.” Throughout the years, it has been common to tie “repentance” in with “salvation,” as if the two are somehow connected. Other than “repentance about who Jesus is,” this is incorrect. In this, the faulty interpretation of these words is that “he found no place for being saved.” That is wholly inaccurate.

The meaning of what the author is saying is that even with his change of mind, the act could not be undone. Vincent’s Word Studies says –

“The words place of repentance mean an opportunity to repair by repenting. He found no way to reverse by repentance what he had done. The penalty could not be reversed in the nature of the case.”

This is why Isaac said, “indeed he shall be blessed.” The blessing was transferred and Esau could not repair this by changing his mind. Charles Ellicott states it as, “He ‘found no place of repentance;’ that first act (Genesis 25:33) could not be recalled, but brought with it a loss which nothing could retrieve.”

The verse has nothing to do with salvation or loss of salvation. It is simply an explanation of what the effects of living in an ungodly manner can be. This is true with the saved and the unsaved. A common saying which fits the intent of the verse is, “You made your bed, now lie in it.” You may have a change of mind about what you did in the past, but “O so sorry. There is no place left for changing your mind. The matter is already settled.”

Life application: Although the account of Jacob and Esau may seem unfair towards Esau because of Jacob's deceit, remember that it was deserved. As the author of Hebrews said, Esau was "profane." God did not author the deceit which occurred, but He allowed it to meet a good end. Jesus Himself, therefore, descended from the line of Jacob and not that of Esau. If you feel wronged in some way, could it be that you have failed to live for God and you are now reaping what you have sown? Be careful never to blame God for misfortune, but rather look for and understand His hand of providence in all things.

Lord, give us wise and discerning hearts to understand our place in Your plan of redemption. Let us not fight bitterly over what we have or what we don't have, but let us bring You glory through accepting our lot and position in life, while at the same time working to better ourselves in an honest manner which glorifies You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, Hebrews 12:18

What seems like an unlikely transition, the author now goes from the account of Esau to the reception of the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai. But he has not changed his focus at all. The word, "For," demonstrates that he is still referring to what he said earlier. In verse 14, he says, "Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." It is exactly this thought that he is conveying now.

Before the giving of the Ten Commandments, this was seen in Exodus 19 –

““Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. ¹¹ And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed

to yourselves *that* you do *not* go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. ¹³Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot *with an arrow*; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.'"" Exodus 19:10-13

The people had to be consecrated and thus "holy" in order to "see the Lord," which is what it says in verse 20 of that chapter with the words, "Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai." At this time the people were utterly overwhelmed by the awesome display their eyes beheld. That will be partly described in the verses ahead, and Moses' reaction will also be revealed by the author. The entire display was both remarkable and fearful to the people.

The author's words now begin to relay the thought that, "If that was so overwhelming, how much more remarkable is that which has occurred in the coming of Christ, who is the Lord." This thought will continue through the rest of the chapter. However, and with that understanding, he now says, "For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched."

That is speaking of Mount Sinai. It is a physical mountain that could be touched, seen, climbed, etc. In contrast to that is the risen and now ascended Lord who is the same Lord who descended on Mount Sinai. When He came to Sinai, even though the mountain could be touched, once He came, it could no longer be touched (as noted in Exodus 19:12 above). This was then reiterated to Moses several times before the ending of the chapter.

The mountain could be physically touched, but it could no longer be so touched when the holiness of the Lord came upon it. If this is the case with Sinai, how much more so with "touching" that which the Lord has now sanctified. The contrast is between Sinai, meaning the Law of Moses, and Mount Zion, meaning the New Covenant.

The author then continues with, “and that burned with fire.” This was the state of Sinai. It burned with fire, as described in the chapter. And then the author says, “and to blackness and darkness and tempest.”

The superlative words describe what occurred at Sinai. They show the awesome nature of the Lord who had come to give His people the law which would be for the conduct of their lives, and which would guide their interactions with the Lord for 1500 years. However, that law ended, and the interaction which occurred through that law ended with it. The author will continue referring to this event, using the words of Exodus, to build up his case concerning the absolute exceeding majesty of what occurred in Christ in comparison to that majestic display which occurred at Sinai.

Life application: The enormity of the display at Sinai demonstrated the severity of what was to come. God was ensuring that what the people heard, they would never forget. The law was to be taken as the holy word which it is, and from the perfectly holy God who spoke it. It can be assumed that any infraction of the words to come would carry a terrible penalty simply by the display that accompanied it. And so it was, as testified throughout the rest of the Old Testament. The law brought fear, and the law brought death. Such is the harshness of the law. Thanks be to God for grace and mercy which came through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Lord, when we read difficult passages that show the severity of violating Your word, help us to keep them in context and to remember what they are teaching us and why. In the end, we all deserve death and condemnation, but You sent Jesus to take our place. How thankful we are for grace and mercy instead of law and punishment! Thank You for Jesus our Lord. Amen.

...and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. Hebrews 12:19

The author now continues with the awesome display of the Lord which was witnessed on Mount Sinai, beginning this verse with, “and the sound of a trumpet.” That is recorded in Exodus 20:18 –

“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet.”

Next, he says, “and the voice of words.” That is recorded in Deuteronomy 4:12 –

“And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you only heard a voice.*”

The two thoughts together (the trumpet and the voice) are again noted in Scripture as being ascribed to the Lord Jesus –

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,’ and, “What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” Revelation 1:10, 11

In this, it is obvious that the Lord (Jehovah) of the Old Testament is the same as the Lord (Jesus) of the New.

Next, the author says, “so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.” This is found in Exodus 20:19 –

“Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’”

The sound of the voice of the Lord was so overwhelming that they feared they would die if they heard anything more from Him directly. The idea being conveyed is that the words of law bring death. However, the words of grace bring life. Everything about the New Covenant, which came through Christ’s blood, is superior to that of the Old.

Life application: In giving the Ten Commandments on Sinai in the way He did, the Lord was checking the people’s hearts. By giving this display, later challenges could be held in only one of two ways – 1) faith that the same God who they heard and saw could handle any trouble, or 2) disobedience and rejection of the God whose power they had seen. As Moses said to them, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” Exodus 20:20

When the times of testing came, did they pass? The answer is, “No.” Israel repeatedly failed in this regard, and so their bodies fell in the wilderness during thirty-eight years of wandering, until that entire generation had perished. The same Lord came and presented Himself in human form in the person of Jesus. The people again failed to accept the word of the Lord and come to Him. In this, they went into an exile which has only ended in modern times. And even now, they still do not believe in the One who came to purify them from all unrighteousness. Pray for Israel – that eyes would be opened. The Lord is calling out to them, just as He has since their inception.

Lord God, if you were displeased with those who saw Your glory on Mt. Sinai and rejected it, how much more then when we... when we reject the display of Your glory in the Person of Jesus Christ. May we never fail to have faith during our times of testing. Given us wisdom in our minds and fortitude in our hearts to cling to our Lord. In His name we pray. Amen.

For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” Hebrews 12:20

The author now continues with his description of what occurred at Mount Sinai at the giving of the Old Covenant. Here he says while speaking of the people of Israel, “For they could not endure what was commanded.” This means that what was commanded them was so terrifying that they couldn’t bear it. The thought conveyed to them simply overwhelmed them.

The Lord was to descend on the mountain, making the entire mountain holy. How could such a thing be? How holy must the Lord be that the entire mountain would then be set apart from them! And this was after they had consecrated themselves. Even after that, they were still not to come near the mountain. And even more, this mandate included animals. As it says, “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.”

The account in Exodus speaks of both man and beast being forbidden from coming near the mountain. The author here is focusing on the beasts because, unlike man, they are simply unreasoning animals. To have them killed may sound unnecessary or even vindictive, but this is not the case. The holiness of God is something that is referred to throughout Scripture. The fallen nature of creation is also mentioned explicitly by Paul in Romans 8. Even animals with no sense of reason were to be killed if they violated this precept.

Secondly, if an animal were to be allowed to live after touching the mountain of the Lord, it could then be turned itself into an idol by the people who saw it. In essence, “Holy Cow! This is a holy cow because it was sanctified by the Lord atop the holy mountain.” If you don't believe this is possible, take a peek at the millions of relics, or beasts, adored and worshiped by countless false religions.

With this understanding, the reason it was to be stoned or shot was to keep a distance between the offender and the executioners. The animal (or person) was, from the moment it touched the mountain, considered devoted to the Lord through destruction. To touch such a thing so devoted would then mean the one who touched it was also so devoted. And so to maintain a separation from it, the animal (or person) was to be killed from a distance.

The purpose of this was to instill in the minds of the people an absolute sense of the holiness of God. The word translated as “touches” is rather rare, being found only in Colossians 2:21, Hebrews 11:28, and here. It gives the sense of touching something which then affects the object. The mountain was sacred and holy. Touching it was, therefore, not permitted.

Another reason for this prohibition, which is only implied, but it stands as a correct interpretation, is that the Lord had accepted Moses (who would go to the mountain) and that he was the people’s chosen representative to the Lord. This is indicated in verse 9 of the chapter, “Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever” (Exodus 19:9).

Life application: Everything in creation fell at the fall. All things are corruptible and in need of the restoration promised in Scripture. Paul indicates this in Romans 8 –

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Romans 8:20, 21

As you can see, the taint of Adam's sin has affected everything, but all things will be restored in due time. As Jesus says in Revelation, "Behold, I make all things new." We have a great hope which will come about in due time. Don't let the temporary, fallen, and often vile nature of the world around you steal your joy. Keep looking ahead to that which is promised, and which is also absolutely guaranteed, because of the work of the Lord Jesus. Good things are ahead.

*O God! Thank You for the promise of restoration and renewal spoken of in Your word. Thank You that backaches, eye problems, sadness, and even death will be wiped away forever. And above all, thank You for Jesus who made the bridge to You possible. We bow at His glorious feet and hail, "Worthy is the Lamb!"
Hallelujah and Amen.*

And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") Hebrews 12:21

The author now turns to the state of Moses at the giving of the law, citing something not recorded anywhere in Scripture. Speaking of the giving of the law, he says, "And so terrifying was the sight."

This tells us that it is speaking of the display of the Lord on the mountain which has been referred to since verse 18. It is not a reference to any other time. From there, he quotes Moses, saying, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling."

It is these words which are in question. There is no such quote to be found. This leaves several possibilities. One is that he is citing a non-biblical tradition among the Jews, of which there are such commentaries in existence. Another is that the author is making the claim under divine inspiration. Stephen speaks of things in Acts 7 which are not recorded elsewhere. A third option is that the author is tying the account of Exodus 3 in with that of Exodus 19:6. There it said, "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."

That would be a logical connection. He was afraid at the burning bush, and so how much more afraid would he be while facing a far greater demonstration of the Lord's glory, covering an entire mountain! One final suggestion is that this is speaking of his words in Deuteronomy 9:19. After receiving the Ten Commandments, Moses went down the mountain to find the people worshipping the golden calf. At that time, Deuteronomy records, "For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the Lord was angry with you, to destroy you."

Moses' fear of what he saw on the mountain was then transferred to an understanding of the holiness of God in relation to the conduct of the people. He fully perceived the danger of violating one of the commandments they had been given. In seeing the conduct of Aaron and the others, his fear of the splendor of the Lord moved him to fear and trembling for the people.

The word translated as "afraid," is *ekphobos*. It signifies "wholly frightened" or "out of one's wits." The only other time it is used is in Mark 9:6, describing the state of Peter during the transfiguration. It is a subtle note of the glory of Christ in relation to the Lord on Mount Sinai. Both events brought such a deep fear on those who beheld the sight, that it brought about a reaction of absolute terror.

Life application: After the people's rejection of the Lord, and in the making of the golden calf, Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! ³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." Exodus 32:31, 32

This revealed the greatness of Moses in the sight of the Lord and the people of Israel. In this, he foreshadows the true Intermediary to come – Jesus our Lord.

Remember, once a person is saved, they can never lose their salvation, but continued sin demonstrates a disregard for the great work of the cross – something we all have done. Were it not for Jesus interceding on our behalf, we

would be utterly consumed by God. But Jesus stands as our Advocate, and in Him we are secure from that which would otherwise utterly condemn us.

Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? To You alone we give thanks and praise for the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Him we praise You, through Him we ask for forgiveness, and through Him we petition You. And in His name we pray today! Amen.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, Hebrews 12:22

The author now says, “But.” This is to contrast what has been said. He has been speaking of God’s revelation of Himself to the people while upon Mount Sinai. The people were told to not come near the mountain lest they die. They were told that whoever who did come near was not to even be touched, but was to be stoned or shot with arrows, signifying being completely rejected by the congregation. There was fire, tempest, the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words which terrified the people, and which brought fear and trembling to Moses. All of that is now contrasted with the word, “But.”

Instead of this revelation of Himself at Mount Sinai, the author says, “you have come to Mount Zion.” In this, the mountain represents the government. At Sinai, the government of the Law of Moses was given. At Mount Zion, the government of the New Covenant was given. The contrast is law verses grace. In one, there was fear. In the other, there is fellowship. In one, there is the burning leading to death. In the other, there is a burning for purification (see 1 Corinthians 3:11-15). These, and all other things, are set in contrast to one another. It demonstrates the infinite superiority of the New Covenant over the Old.

The author continues with, “and to the city of the living God.” Not only is Mount Sinai representative of government, but it is a government which issues from a city. Mount Sinai was a type of government – meaning the law – that issued from the Lord, through Moses, and which the people were kept separate from. There was the Sovereign ruling from afar, in blackness and tempest, and which sent forth fear and death. Mount Zion is also a city, a place where people dwell, and in which the people participate – even in “the living God.” As He has sealed His people and given them life, so life issues forth from Him eternally.

Though He is and always has been “the living God,” to the people under the law, He was the God of death, because through the law comes the knowledge of sin, and through sin comes death. Therefore, He was completely separate from the people in this regard. However, for those who come to Mount Zion, they are not under law, but are under grace (Romans 6:14, 15). Therefore, they are not having sin imputed to them (2 Corinthians 5:19). The contrast is set between what was in Moses, and what is now in Christ.

Next, the author says, “the heavenly Jerusalem.” This is an important addition because in Galatians 4 the earthly Jerusalem is equated directly to Mount Sinai.

“Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Galatians 4:22-26

The earthly is but a mere shadow of the heavenly. Whereas the earthly was under the law and in bondage, the heavenly is founded upon GRACE and it is where there is freedom.

From there, the author finishes the verse with, “to an innumerable company of angels.” The Hebrew reads *urias*. It specifically means “ten thousand,” but it is given to represent an indefinite number which is too large to count.

The Greek is highly debated, but due to the structure of the verses, it is likely that the comma should go after the word “company.” Thus, it would read, “to an innumerable company, of angels...” (connected to the next verse). To get a full view of this would take reading many commentaries of great commentators of the past. Suffice it to say that unlike Mount Sinai where the Lord sat alone upon the Mountain issuing forth directives through Moses, here, there are innumerable “messengers,” as the Greek word translated as “angels” means. There is nothing dark and shadowy, but only the light of the radiance of God which illuminates the city, and in which the word of God goes forth like water to a dry and barren land to quench the eternal thirst of God’s people.

Life application: Paul says in Romans –

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2

The law – even from the day it was given – was a reminder of death and the impossibility of pleasing God by observing it, simply because no one can fully live by it. And so death reigned from the time that the law was introduced. Again, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:6, “...who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

The “letter” is the law and it brought forth death, but the Spirit – given by Christ – gives life. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The glory of what is found in Christ, and which lies ahead for His redeemed, is truly a surpassing glory. It is a glory that we simply cannot even imagine at this time. How wonderful it will be!

Lord, what a wonderful and precious assurance You have given us through the Person of Jesus. Now, because of Him, we can have everlasting fellowship with You without fear. Instead, only eternal joy awaits us as we join the heavenly choir in singing praises to You! Help us to keep our eyes on this wonderful promise that we might not falter in the present. Amen!

...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, Hebrews 12:23

The author continues with the words of the previous verse concerning where believers have arrived when they come to God in Christ. As noted in the previous verse, there should be a comma after “to an innumerable company,” and then it should read with the word “angels” being connected to the first clause in this verse. Thus, it would say, “to a festal assembly of angels.” From there, it would continue with, “and church of the firstborn...” Though this is debated, and translations vary, this appears to be more in line with the intent of the passage.

In this construction, it would then show that both the angelic assembly and the church of the firstborn are gathered in one assembly, both meeting for a common purpose. The word translated as “general (festal) assembly” is only found here in Scripture. It signifies a general gathering to celebrate, or commemorate, an event. It is akin to the Feasts of the Lord found under the Old Covenant. There is one gathering of all people to come into the presence of God and rejoice in the works of God in Christ, and to hail the Lamb Slain, and the Risen Savior.

The words, “the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven,” connects believers to Christ who is called the Firstborn on several occasions in the New Testament, including Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15 & 18, Hebrews 1:6; and Revelation 1:5. In being united to Him, we share in His status, having moved from Adam to Christ. The thought goes back to Esau (Edom) who bartered away his status as the firstborn under his father Isaac, and which then transferred to Jacob (Israel). That

looked forward to Christ's attainment of that status when Adam lost his right to it, a concept described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. For all, Jew and Gentile, who come to Christ, they are included in the spiritual heritage of Israel.

Next, the author says, "to God the Judge of all." The Greek, more correctly, reads "to a Judge, who is God of all." This is reflected in several translations, such as the Christian Standard Bible –

"...to the assembly of the firstborn whose names have been written in heaven, to a Judge, who is God of all, to the spirits of righteous people made perfect." CSB

This would then be in line with Daniel 7:9-14, where God sits as Judge over all humanity, and who then brings forth His Son as a testimony to that judgment. As Vincent's Word Studies states it, "God of all his first-born, of those whom he chastens, of all who are in filial relations with him under both covenants, and who, therefore, need not fear to draw near to him as judge."

The author finishes this verse with, "to the spirits of just men made perfect." The words, "just men made perfect," are based on the Greek word, *teleioó*. It signifies reaching the final stage after working through an entire process. It shows that only in the coming of Christ were all of the saints of old perfected. Man has gone through dispensations of time while God has slowly unveiled His redemptive plan. Christ is the focal point of all dispensations, and those who were prior to His coming did not receive the promise in those times. Instead, "God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Hebrews 11:40).

Life application: Because of Jesus, we now have a restored relationship with the Creator Himself...we have come to God. And God, being judge of all men has the authority to save or destroy. In the case of those who follow Jesus, we are made perfect by His work. The pardon is given, the penalty removed, the transfer is made! How can one read this verse and not be excited enough to jump and shout!

Praise be to God for what He has done through Christ on our behalf. Praise be to Jesus who has redeemed God's people! Hallelujah and Amen!

Yes Lord! You have, through the precious Gift of Jesus, brought us to Yourself. As Your word says, "judgment begins at the house of the Lord," but in the case of Your redeemed, it will be a judgment unto eternal life. How can we do anything but praise You! In the most awesome and glorious name of Jesus we pray! Amen.

...to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that* of Abel. Hebrews 12:24

The author has been proclaiming the glory of what God has done in Christ, showing where the faithful have come to, each word building upon the next and contrasting that which was with that which now is. In the third and final verse of this continuing thought, he now says that you have come "to Jesus."

His is the Name above every name, and that name to which all will someday bow. We have come to the Savior of the world and the bright light shining in the darkness. This great Man is the purpose and point of the faith, and without Him, there is only law leading to death and condemnation. But in Jesus, there is a better hope of glory because He is "the Mediator of the new covenant."

The Greek reads, "the Mediator *of a* new covenant." It is set in contrast to the Old Covenant. What was is exceeded by what is offered. The word "mediator" signified an arbitrator who guarantees the performance of each and every term which is stipulated in the covenant. It is he who works to bring peace between two parties in the fulfillment of the compact.

The word translated as “new” is used only here in this manner of describing this New Covenant. It is the word *néos*. It signifies something that was not there before. It is something recently discovered. The usual word to describe the New Covenant is *kainós*, new in quality. The difference is minimal, but it is one more of time rather than quality. However, the word is used elsewhere in the sense of quality as well. In the end, both terms are used to describe this covenant in the Bible, and thus it is a covenant which is both new in time and in quality.

The author then says, “and to the blood of sprinkling.” Here he introduces a new word to describe an Old Testament term into the New. He has already used another word to describe sprinkling, but this particular word is found only here and in 1 Peter 1:2. It is a part of the rites of the sacrificial system where the blood of a sacrificial animal was sprinkled in a certain way and at certain times. That is now applied to the blood of Christ, showing again that what Christ did is in fulfillment of those Old Covenant types and shadows, and it is superior to those.

In this sprinkling, the author says it “speaks better things than *that* of Abel.” The phrase should be rendered, “speaks better than Abel.” Here, the blood of Abel is personified, just as it was in the Genesis account –

“What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” Genesis 4:10

Christ’s blood speaks; Abel’s blood cried out. This is not referring to the blood of Abel’s sacrifice being better than the fruit of Cain’s offering. That was already explained in Chapter 11. Their offerings were accepted or not accepted based on the faith of the offering. But in the fallen world, where Abel died and His blood demanded punishment, Christ entered and shed His blood which was sprinkled for us in mercy and forgiveness. This is seen in type in the pattern set by the words of the last martyr of the Old Covenant, and the first recorded under the new –

“Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son; and as he died, he said, ‘The Lord look on *it*, and repay!’” 2 Chronicles 24:22

“Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:60

The blood of Christ speaks better than the cries of Abel’s blood, and the witness of these faithful was recorded for us for this purpose. The law demands justice; Christ offers forgiveness. The scholar Delitzsch sums up his thoughts on Hebrews 12:22-24 with these words –

“What it was to which Israel in the time of the Old Covenant drew nigh, we have now heard. Their drawing nigh was at the same time a standing afar off; the mount of the revelation might not be approached by them; the voice of God was too terrible to be borne; and yet it was only tangible material nature in which God at once manifested and concealed Himself. The true and inner communion with God had not yet been revealed: first must the Law lead to the painful consciousness that sin prevents such communion, and intensify the longing that sin may be taken out of the way. Under the New Covenant, no longer is a tangible mountain the place of a divine revelation made from afar; but heaven is thrown open, and a new super-sensuous world in which God is enthroned is opened to admit us, opened through the Mediator of the New Covenant, accessible in virtue of His atoning blood” (Delitzsch).

The scholar Bengel then provides a list of the superior nature of what is presented in these verse concerning Christ –

Hebrews 12:22. Ἄλλὰ, but) A sevenfold opposition. Let us see the several points:

- I. The mountain which was touched:
Mount Zion.
- II. The fire that burned:
The city of the living GOD.
- III. Blackness or mist:
Ten thousands (an innumerable company) of angels and of the first-born.
- IV. Darkness:
GOD, the Judge of all.
- V. Tempest:
The spirits of just men made perfect.
- VI. The sound of a trumpet:
Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament
- VII. The voice of words:
The blood of sprinkling speaking what is very good.

Life application: You have come to Jesus! Of all the joys we will experience in the ages to come, none will be more precious than coming to Jesus – first in faith, and then face to face. He established the New Covenant in His blood – through His death on the cross. It is the sprinkling of His blood which cleanses humanity from all sin. Abel’s blood was the first recorded to have been shed on earth and it came from a person whose sacrifice pleased God when offered. However, Abel inherited Adam’s sin nature when he was born and therefore his blood, along with all others who have died since then, was insufficient to restore fallen man. Jesus came into the world without sin and lived perfectly. Because of this, His blood was sufficient; His sacrifice could cleanse completely. Just as Moses “sprinkled” the people, the law, the tabernacle, and everything else with blood to purify those things, Jesus’ blood is said to have been “sprinkled” to bring us cleansing as well. As Peter records –

“To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” 1 Peter 1:1, 2

As you can see, Peter ties in a great deal with the sprinkling of Jesus’ blood. Without it, none of the other things mentioned could have occurred. But because of His sacrifice, we are sanctified through the work of the Spirit. Without Jesus’ death, no other good thing would be possible. And by His resurrection, we are assured of eternal life! What a wonderful Lord!

Lord God, it is hard for us to imagine just what Jesus went through on our behalf. The cross with its terrors is simply beyond our comprehension, and He went there willingly. May we never forget what You have done for us through the giving of Christ Jesus our Lord. Surely great praise belongs to You alone! Amen.

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

Here we have an exhortation which is tied directly to verse 12:19. There it said –

“...and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.”

The same word translated as “begged” there is now used twice in this verse and it is translated as “refuse.” The word signifies “to deprecate” or “to shun.” Those who were at Sinai begged for the voice to no longer speak to them, and they continued to do so implicitly throughout the entire time of the law, ignoring it,

shunning it, and actively despising it. Now the author says, “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.”

The word of God is given, it has revealed Christ, and we are not to refuse it. It must be remembered at this point that the book is written to the Hebrews. They had refused the word, and they continued to refuse the word. In the end times, they are now – through this epistle – being implored to not refuse this word. However, using the term “we” is not inappropriate.

The word is given to the whole world. It is given to believers and unbelievers, but in particular, the book of Hebrews is directed to the Hebrew people. However, it contains truths which are for all. As it is specifically to the Hebrews though, the next words make complete sense, “For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth.”

A contrast is made to the previous words, “Him who speaks.” This is obviously referring to the One in heaven because He is being set in contrast to “Him who spoke on earth.” It takes the reader all the way back to the beginning of the epistle –

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.” Hebrews 1:1, 2

Therefore, the phrase, “Him who spoke on earth,” signifies the Law of Moses. First, it was spoken by God at Mount Sinai, a physical location. But afterward, it was spoken by God through Moses. In both, they refused Him who spoke on earth. Though the law is from God, it was transmitted in an earthly way, where the people could receive the word and act upon it as such. And yet, having this law received in this way, it availed them nothing.

They received judgment and punishment as is recorded from the incident of the golden calf, all the way through until the final words of the Old Testament. In this, “they did not escape.” Understanding this, the author then says, “much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven.”

This is speaking of Christ Jesus. He is the Man from heaven, and He is the Man who ascended again to heaven. His word established the New Covenant, and it is this which is to be received and acted upon.

The words, “turn away,” are a present participle and should say “turning away.” The thought is turning away from the New Covenant and back to Judaism, in whatever form – Torah observance, Talmud obedience, etc. The Hebrew people, in particular, are being addressed. But the truths extend to any who hear the Man from heaven and turn away from His voice.

The premise here is similar to that which has already been presented in Hebrews 2, where the same word, translated as “escape,” is used –

“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” Hebrews 2:2-4

Life application: In the Bible, there seems to always be a sober reminder amidst the excitement. The last three verses have spoken of the heavenly Jerusalem, of joy in the future, and of the promise of being eternally with Jesus. However, this verse now reminds the Hebrew reader (and by extension all others) that this is not automatic. You may have been to a funeral at some point where the words, “He is in a better place now,” are spoken. It seems everyone in the box is “going to heaven” and everyone in the audience is a believer – but this isn’t so. Rather, we need to accept and not refuse God’s good purposes for us. Those who refused to

obey after seeing the display at Mount Sinai “did not escape” and their bodies died in the wilderness. As Paul says elsewhere –

“...for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.” Romans 2:13

Life with Christ also involves a commitment. If someone spends his entire life sitting in church listening to the message and never accepting Christ’s pardon, then all that time was wasted. As it says, those who heard the Law of Moses and rejected it did not escape. As this is so, “much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven.” Let us think better thoughts though. You have heard the word of Christ, you have understood His mission, and certainly you won’t reject His offer. Be wise and understanding now, while you have breath, to follow the One who loves you so very much.

Thank You Lord for the offer, thank you for the promises, and thank you for our salvation through receiving what Christ Jesus has done! We know it is by Your great and powerful arm that we have been redeemed, and so we will follow where You lead all of our days. Glory to You, O God. Amen.

...whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” Hebrews 12:26

The author finishes the thought which began in the previous verse. The words, “whose voice then shook the earth,” are speaking of the revelation of God on Mount Sinai. That is recorded in Exodus 19:18 –

“Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.”

This same God, who so powerfully displayed His splendor at Sinai, “has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” Here, the author is quoting from Haggai 2:6, 7 –

“For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Once more (it *is* a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

This is speaking of the coming Messiah, the “Desire of All Nations.” This tells us that just as the Old Covenant shook the earth, so would the New. Haggai was speaking of Christ’s first advent and the shaking of the earth in a manner which would realign all things, not just in Israel, but all nations. A new order of things would come about where salvation would be offered to all, and the people who were considered God’s people would be set aside. And those who were not considered His people would be called by His name.

But, the idea of both earth and heaven shaking certainly has a future application in the second advent of Christ as well. What began in His first advent will be fully realized in His second. Further, Israel will again be called His people when the time prophesied in Scripture comes about. A fuller explanation of what is meant in this verse will come in the verses ahead.

Life application: At the receiving the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, it said, “the whole mountain quaked greatly.” This same sentiment is also recorded in the Psalms, giving more insight into the awesome display –

“O God, when You went out before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness, *Selah*

⁸The earth shook;

The heavens also dropped *rain* at the presence of God;

Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.” Psalm 68:7, 8

Imagine how awesome it was to stand and receive the Law at Sinai. Given the glory that was revealed then, it should be understood that Scripture testifies that what occurs for us in receiving the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord is even more awesome. What Israel received by sight, we receive by faith. And it is faith which is reckoned to us for righteousness under the New Covenant. Let us live by faith, and let us endeavor to hold fast to that faith no matter what difficulties lie ahead of us. We have a sure word, and the absolute hope of glory in what that word reveals – JESUS.

Lord God, when You shake the world, only that which is unshakable will remain. May our faith be strong and never shaken, and may we be a testimony to Your glory until Christ comes for us. And someday, the nations of the earth will endure the trial of Your purification before His second coming. May those who are wise realize what is happening and call out to You in faith. When the time of shaking comes, give Your people wisdom. Amen.

Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Hebrews 12:27

We now come to a verse which is highly debated over as to its meaning. The author says, “Now this, ‘Yet once more.’” That is speaking of what was just stated in the previous verse which said –

“Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.”

The words “Yet once more,” signify “once more only.” There is a finality to what is being accomplished. When it is done, the results will be complete, final, and without need of further action.

Now explaining this, he says it “indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken.” The words “being shaken” are translated from a present participle and so it is obvious that this is on-going. It is not something that was simply accomplished and finalized at Christ’s first advent, but which takes us into a point in the future. From there, he explains exactly what he is referring to as meaning, “of things that are made.”

This is the clause that most commentators struggle with. Exactly what the author is referring to seems difficult to pin down, but he will explicitly say this in the next verse –

“...since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken.”

Therefore, it seems best to look at the words, “of things that are made,” as referring to anything that is not a part of this future kingdom, when it is brought to its final state. There are seven dispensations of time. In those dispensations, various things have occurred which are temporary in nature. For example, the dispensation of “government” allows the nations to govern themselves. This will be shaken out of the plan.

The dispensation of law required numerous things for Israel to do or not to do. These pointed to the work of the coming Christ, but were only intended as temporary pictures of what He would fulfill and then set aside. These will be shaken out of the Hebrew people when they put their full trust and hope in Christ. In essence, everything that is to be shaken out of the things that are made is already set to be shaken out by Christ’s first advent. However, they are actually not yet accomplished. This is akin to salvation. For those who have come to Christ, we are already saved, justified, sanctified, and glorified in God’s plans according to Paul’s words, and yet we are still here going through this fallen life in a fallen world. This idea corresponds to what the author is saying here in Hebrews.

All of this is done because of the work of Christ, but it is waiting to be realized so “that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.” When that which is accomplished by Christ is fully realized in what God has set based on Christ’s work, the only thing that will be left is that which is fully acceptable and pleasing to God. We can think of it this way –

“The work is accomplished and the plan is complete, but we are just waiting for time to catch up with that completion.”

One can look to Revelation 13:8 to more fully grasp this –

“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

There, Christ is called, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” God’s plan was already accomplished before a single thing had been created, but that plan had to be worked out in the stream of time. Eventually, Christ came and was crucified. The effects of that act were realized in God’s mind from the beginning, and yet the full effects within the stream of time are yet ahead. How do we know this is correct? Because the book is written, and it details what the final glory which lies ahead will be like. Thank God that we have a sure hope because of Christ who makes all things new!

Life application: The author tells us that what is being shaken is that which has been created. This doesn’t mean there was something wrong with the creation, but fault resulted because of our actions. For example, a house may be made of wood; there is nothing wrong with the wood, but the way it’s used may be faulty. That which is created, then, can be applied to the building blocks we assemble. That can be through materials, such as for the house, or through teachings, such as faulty doctrine in a denomination. That which is faulty will be shaken “so that what cannot be shaken may remain.” As Jesus is eternal, not created, He cannot be shaken –

“You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. world.” John 8:23

And again –

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’” John 18:36

Following our faith in Jesus to its logical conclusion where proper faith, in Him, will never be shaken –

“For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”
Romans 10:11

Therefore, that which “cannot be shaken” includes our faith in the Rock of our salvation – faith in Jesus Christ. All other systems of religion, all other philosophies, all other attempts to stand righteous before God, all of these things will be shaken. By the very fact that they are faulty, they will be removed. Hold fast to your faith in Christ Jesus which is worth more than anything else in this fallen world, which is set to be shaken.

Lord God, You have brought us from total separation from You to complete harmony with You. And it has been accomplished – from beginning to end – by You. It is through Christ that the world has been reconciled to You. Soon, all that fails to measure up in this test of grace through faith will be removed. Help us to share this simple and yet all-important message while there is still time. And Lord God, thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 12:28

The word, “Therefore,” is given to sum up the words of verses 18-27. The author has been dealing with the kingdom which is expected for the believer and what it will be like. This is received as an inheritance the moment a person places his trust in Christ, but it is not actually received at that point in time, just as an inheritance is given to a son, but he does not receive it until a certain point in the future.

This is certain based on the author’s continued words which say, “since we are receiving a kingdom.” The verb is a present participle, and thus “are receiving” is correct. This will be realized at a future point, but which is being received as believers are brought into the New Covenant since its inception. This kingdom is one “which cannot be shaken.”

These words are in confirmation of what the author has referred to in the previous three verses and are summed up in verse 27. There it spoke of “the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.” That which remains is the “kingdom which cannot be shaken.” Based on the fact that this lies ahead for the believer as a certainty, he then says, “let us have grace.”

It is argued by scholars whether this should be translated as “grace” or “thankfulness.” Both ideas fit well in the verse if so translated. The chosen translation is to be based on what is next stated, which is, “by which we may serve God acceptably.”

If thankfulness, then Jesus’ words of Luke 17 fit the idea well –

“Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” Luke 17:9, 10

It is further seen in Paul’s words elsewhere, such as –

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry.” 1 Timothy 1:12

However, the idea of having grace also fits the idea of serving God acceptably. In Romans 12, Paul speaks of the grace given to him which allowed him to serve, and then he says the same of those he is writing to by saying, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:6-8).

One receives grace to in order to serve, and therefore he should have grace when serving. As you can see, and as stated above, the word can easily be connected to either “grace” or “thankfulness.” Either translation is acceptable.

From there, the author says we are to have this grace (or thankfulness) and to use it in a manner “by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” The word “acceptably” literally means, “well-pleasingly.” We are to serve in a well-pleasing manner in order for it to be received acceptably. And that is by giving God due reverence, meaning with circumspect behavior, and with a godly fear, meaning that we are to understand that our actions will be judged and will be either rewarded or burnt up.

We cannot presume that because we are doing good works in Jesus' name that our conduct can be less than godly in the performance of those works. The two must be united to form a holy, acceptable offering to the Lord.

Life application: As difficult as it is to imagine, we – the fallible masses of Christendom – are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Imagine the bickering, divisiveness, petty argumentation, and out-right backstabbing that goes on in Christian circles. People fight over whether to stand or sit while praying. Congregations divide over which version of the Bible should be used. People point fingers at those who dress differently. The list goes on. And yet, despite all of this child-like behavior, we are promised a kingdom. Let us be thankful.

It is hard to imagine how it must look to the Creator when we disparage each other as we do in the name of “denominational purity.” And yet, we are promised a kingdom. Let us be thankful.

Despite ourselves – even despite ourselves – we are promised a kingdom. Let us be thankful.

And because we are promised such an unshakable kingdom, let us worship our Creator acceptably, and with reverence and godly fear. Reverence and godly fear, although often held by the entire congregation, is an individual decision. Whatever you do, do it to the glory of God. Then your service will be acceptable!

Almighty and glorious Creator, help us to focus on the proper form of service to You – in whatever manner we serve – with reverence and awe. As we serve, may our words bring you glory, may our actions bring you glory, and may our very lives bring you glory as we worship you – our great and majestic God. Amen.

For our God *is* a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:29

This verse is often quoted in relation to God's judgment on sinners who will be consumed before Him. And, it is true that this is the case. Vincent's Word Studies explains this verse as –

“He is the God of both covenants (see Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:2, and notes); but though now revealed in Jesus Christ, and offering all the privileges of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24), his anger burns against those who reject these privileges.”

The verse is a quote from Deuteronomy 4:24 –

“For the Lord your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

Understanding this, and knowing that the same God is revealed in both covenants, it doesn't mean that this is a reference to unbelievers. Rather, the previous verse said –

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

The author there is clearly speaking of saved believers, not unbelievers. And yet, as saved believers, we must “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. The reason for this isn't because we might lose our salvation and be cast into the fires of hell, but because we will stand before Christ Jesus and we will be judged by Him for reward and loss. This is found first in 2 Corinthians 3:11-15 –

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

And then again, in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 we read this –

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”

It is this fire which consumes which the author is here referring to. It is not one of judgment leading to condemnation, but one of judgment leading to final purification. All that which is of passing value will be burned away. What is left is what we shall be for all eternity.

Life application: In the quote from Paul, he gave two types of foundations – one built on something which can withstand fire and one which can’t. Gold, silver, and costly stones can all withstand fire and are purified from impurities when heated, but wood, hay, and straw are all easily burned up. The question for each of us then is, “What type of eternal foundation am I laying?” If we are spending our Christian lives living marginally for the Lord and entertaining the world, our deeds will be burned up. If we are living our lives for His glory and to His good ends, then what we do will be refined and found useful in our eternal home. Think now on the things of God and live for him lest your deeds be consumed, rather than purified in His refining fire.

Truly Lord, You leave the choice up to us – will we receive a thimble, a cup, a bucket, or a drum full of Your blessings when we stand before You? May our deeds be pleasing in Your sight, and may our lives not be wasted in the temporary when the eternal is our true home. Teach us to live our days rightly. Amen.

CHAPTER 13

Let brotherly love continue. Hebrews 13:1

We now begin the final chapter of the book of Hebrews, and it will last for less than a month of daily commentaries. Verse 1 begins the chapter right where chapter 12 left off –

For our God is a consuming fire.

Let brotherly love continue.

The thought of the previous verse was that of God's fire consuming that which is not acceptable in His people when they enter into glory. All such things are considered as wood, hay, or stubble and will be burned up at the judgment seat of Christ. In order to have more gain and less loss, the author gives a note of expectation by saying, "Let brotherly love continue."

The Greek word is *philadelphia*. It means, "affection for the brethren." This is why the city of Philadelphia is known as "The city of brotherly love." Here, the author acknowledges that brotherly love was evidenced among them, and he is spurring them on to continue with this attitude. This was seen in his words of Chapter 6 –

"For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

In conducting themselves in this manner, and in continuing to do so in the future, they will have less of the "consuming fire," and more of the "well done good and faithful servant," coming their way when they stand before Christ. So should it be with each one of us.

It is to be understood that the idea of brotherly love here is limited to the body of believers. This is seen, for example, in Peter's words in his second letter –

“Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” 1 Peter 2:17

A distinction is made here, as is made by Paul when he uses the same term as this verse in Hebrews, *philadelphia*, in Romans 12:10 and 1 Thessalonians 4:9.

Life application: One thing that is stressed again and again in the New Testament is brotherly love; having affection for all in the body of Christ. This is unfortunately not something that comes about as much as it should. Rather, we divide churches over teeny issues and we disown friends because our feelings get hurt over something they say. But Paul is pretty clear about how we should conduct ourselves around other believers –

“If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? ⁶ But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

⁷ Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated? ⁸ No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things *to your* brethren!” 1 Corinthians 6:4-8

He says that it would be better that we were cheated than to turn and sue a fellow believer. It's not just for our sake that he says this, but rather for the sake of Jesus' name. When fellow Christians act in such an unbecoming manner, the One who ultimately looks bad in others' eyes is Jesus – “Ah, those Christians are all a bunch of hypocrites.”

Are we setting a noble example for Christ in our conduct and behavior? Think on these things and ... keep loving each other as brothers. This is the calling to which we are called. Let's pray about this....

Lord Jesus, it is extremely hard to overlook an offense when we are wronged by others. Give us hearts that are more willing to be molded to Your image. You have forgiven us so very much and we need to emulate the grace bestowed upon us. In the end, may it be Your name which is held in high esteem as we live our lives to Your glory. Amen.

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. Hebrews 13:2

This verse closely matches Paul's words of Romans 12:13 where he uses the same word signifying "hospitality" that is used here. There he exhorts that they were to be "distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality." As there, the author here exhorts the Hebrew people that they are not to "forget to entertain strangers."

Some scholars take this as meaning that this is speaking of fellow believers, and not necessarily anyone in general. There is a giant problem with that thought which is revealed in the next words, "for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels." A stranger is a person who is unknown. One could go through a process of asking questions about his faith, the church he attends, the name of the pastor, etc., but this isn't the intent of the words. It is to "entertain strangers."

It may be that finding out if a person is a believer is a good thing to do. If not, then one can evangelize the non-believer. But this verse leaves no qualifiers, and it doesn't mention the strangers as "brethren." It simply says to "entertain strangers." In so doing, one might actually, and without knowing it, "entertain angels."

The word “angel” signifies a messenger. It is true that the word is usually associated with heavenly beings, but Paul says this to the Galatians using the same word –

“And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.” Galatians 4:14

James says this about the spies whom Rahab received, again using the same word –

“Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?” James 2:25

Paul’s statement indicates an angel of God, but they knew him to be a messenger of the gospel. James’ words indicate that these spies were messengers. Rahab entertained, or welcomed, them and saved herself and her household. It does seem, however, that the intent of the author’s words is that he is referring to heavenly beings. Some equate this with the visitation of Abraham by the three men in Genesis 18. However, Abraham, from his first words to them, addressed the leader of them as Adonai. It is a term indicating the Lord (Jehovah). Abraham wasn’t unaware of who He was, only as to why He had come.

The reason for this verse is probably that of a test of the individual. God already knows how we, as individuals, will respond to certain situations, but we do not. By sending an angel, we are given the chance to learn about ourselves, and to then reflect on what occurred. In the end, though, the verse says that our meeting is actually unknown to us. We will not be able to definitively state, “I was visited by an angel.” Rather, we will have a suspicion that it is so. This is the purpose of such a test.

Life application: Whether or not people since the completion of the Bible really have had angelic visits where they have communicated with those angels, while knowing they were angels, is disputable. The evidence is usually against such. However, the author today makes it abundantly clear that we may be visited by angels without ever realizing it.

When we entertain a stranger – helping him in some way for example – we learn more about ourselves. After doing whatever it is he has come to challenge us with, we can look back and really wonder, “Was that an angel?” How often do we hear of someone who helps another person, or is helped by them, and then that person just disappears? When this happens, the person will evaluate his own actions during the situation and hopefully realize that one of God’s messengers really may have been involved in it.

This should (stress should) make him want to search out the things of God even more. It should also prompt him to act likewise towards others in the future. If you believe you have had an angelic encounter, take time to evaluate yourself. If there are angels, there is a God. If there’s a God, then we really are accountable to Him. Contemplate this and understand His good intent for you by allowing an angel to interact with you.

Lord, Your word says that we are to entertain strangers because we may actually be entertaining an angel without even realizing it. As this would then be a test for us to learn from, help us to reflect on all of our interactions with others, and to be willing to be hospitable to everyone that we are able to help. Isn't this the purpose of such a test in the first place? Help us to be charitable according to the grace You have first shown us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also. Hebrews 13:3

The author has been referring to matters of conduct for the body of believers. In verse 1, he mentioned continuing in brotherly love. Then he referred to entertaining strangers. Now, he says to “Remember the prisoners.”

Though he is certainly speaking first and foremost of believers here, and not merely prisoners in general, it probably extends beyond that as well. There are some who are in prison who rightly need to be there, and it is the best place for them to be. However, there are others who are prisoners who are believers that have been imprisoned for their faith. There are captives of war, and there are those who were sold into slavery – maybe because they couldn’t pay their debts. The Greek word signifies being a captive, as in bonds.

When he says to remember them, it means more than just to think about them, but to consider their plight, empathize with them, and pray for them. And then he explains it by saying, “as if chained with them.” The Greek word he uses means to consider themselves as if being bound together with them, as prisoners often are. But in this, there are two possible extensions of what it means:

1. As if being bound with them literally; as if in chains together, or
2. Because we are bound with them in the sense that all are slaves of someone. We are either a slave to the physical world, or we are slaves to Christ and His righteousness.

The first is probably what is on the author’s mind, but the second is probably still a consideration of his. He then says, “those who are mistreated.” The word here is only found in Hebrews 11:37 (describing the mistreatment of those of faith in past times) and here. It speaks of those who are literally tormented or suffer adversity at the hands of another.

To finish the thought, he then says, “since you yourselves are in the body also.” Here, he is referring to the physical body in which we live, not the body of believers. This is certain because if he were speaking of the body of believers, the word “body” would be preceded by an article. The only other time it is used this way is in 2 Corinthians 12:2 where Paul refers to himself.

Here, the author is speaking of those who are alive and who are suffering. Because we are still in the body, we should remember those who have it off worse than we do, empathize with them, pray for them, and even visit them if this is an option.

Life application: Some of the most effective ministries around are prison ministries and they can reap a gigantic harvest for Christ. If you have never considered this as an opportunity to tell others about God’s great plan, there are usually groups which already minister to prisons across the world. Maybe this is something you could consider as part of your gratefulness to Him. The author, and thus God who inspired the author, wants us to empathize with others who face trials, not just to brush off their situations with a shrug. Most of us will never face any such trial, mistreatment, or imprisonment, so it is hard to empathize, but this is what we have been asked to do.

Above all, if you are aware of someone who has genuinely been arrested or mistreated because of his or her Christian testimony, be sure to empathize with that person first and foremost, and comfort them if you can. Let them know that their trial is not in vain.

Lord, thank you for those who have faithfully endured for Your cause and are suffering or imprisoned for Your name. There are many in distant lands, and even in our own nation who, even now, fit this category. Please be with them and comfort them in their hardships. This, to Your honor and for Your glory. Amen.

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Hebrews 13:4

This verse is in the middle of a list of exhortations, imploring the reader to do certain things. Because of this, many translations supply the word “let” into its words, understanding that it is implied in the overall context. Thus, it would be a continued exhortation –

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” (NASB)

This is probably the correct sense based on thoughts which come before and after this verse. The author has already noted fornication in Hebrews 12:16. Thus, this is an argument against that, and a call to holiness. And so he begins with “Marriage is honorable among all.” As noted, including the word “Let” is probably the true intent.

Either way, this is a direct statement that marriage is an acceptable practice for all, and that it is an honorable institution. Paul warned against those who forbid marriage in 1 Timothy 4:3. That warning has, unfortunately, been ignored even since the earliest times of the church, and it continues to be ignored by the Roman Catholic Church for their clergy. Other aberrant sects have forbidden it in various ways as well. Such practices have inevitably led to sexual perversion in countless ways.

The verse continues with, “and the bed undefiled.” Again, going with the thought of an exhortation, it would say, “and let the marriage bed be undefiled.” Purity within the marriage is what is expected, and faithfulness to one’s spouse is called for. God created man and woman, and He ordained that they would unite in marriage. In this, they are to be faithful to one another.

With this understanding, he continues with, “but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” The Greek reads with God being placed in the emphatic position. In this, we see that the general society may condone such acts, but God will still judge those things that others allow. It is His standard, and not our fallible societal allowances, which will be used as the measure for judgment.

This is especially important to remember, particularly in today’s world. Every type of perversion is now becoming societally acceptable (see Romans 1:32), but such things are strongly warned against in Scripture. Believers are to hold to God’s standards and to proclaim them regardless of what the larger society allows. Unfortunately, the majority of the church has all but failed in this. Entire denominations have fallen into line with the wicked allowances of society, and they have often even become the most vocal proponents of such vile behavior. God will judge them in righteousness.

Life application: We can infer that the first ordained rite between humans in history is that of marriage. Theologically, the account of Eve being taken from Adam’s side during his sleep is of much greater symbolic importance than most people realize.

Just as Eve came from Adam’s side in a death-like sleep, so the church came from Christ’s side as He was pierced in death. Out flowed the water and blood confirming His death and establishing the New Covenant. Therefore, just as “the marriage bed” is to be kept pure, the symbolism agrees with the purity of doctrine – never mixing any outside religious expression with biblical Christianity.

The Bible equates mingling false religion with adultery. Because this comparison is made, the absolute purity of being faithful to one’s spouse is of extreme importance to God. We cannot defile our marriage bed, nor our religious expression, and come out unscathed. If you are having either a sexual affair outside of marriage, or a religious affair (such as adding in Buddhism, horoscopes, etc.), you are on extremely shaky grounds and will be judged for your actions. Keep your marriage and your doctrine pure – to the honor of Christ.

Lord, thank You for the covenant of marriage; and thank you for the New Covenant in Christ Jesus' blood. Give us wise and discerning eyes to look on our spouses with reverence and to conduct our married life in purity. Likewise, give us the same spiritual discernment in how we relate to You. These things we pray that You may be glorified, and that we will be acceptable to You. Amen.

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

Again, as in the previous verse, the words "Let your" are to be inferred, and are supplied by the translators. In this case, "*Let your conduct be without covetousness.*" This is a theme which is also seen from Paul twice. In the previous verse, the author spoke of sexual impurity. Here he speaks of covetousness. This pattern is also found in Colossians 3:5 –

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Again, it is seen in Ephesians 5:3 –

"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints."

It is even seen in Hebrews 12:16, which combines the two, "lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright."

This is, again, a good indication that Paul is the author of Hebrews. The internal clues are many to indicate this.

Instead of pursuing covetousness, the author next exhorts the reader to “*be content with such things as you have.*” One follows naturally after the other. If one determines not to be covetous, he will demonstrate a state of contentment with what he does have. And the reciprocal is true as well. If one is content with what his life consists of, he will generally not be covetous over the things he does not have.

This does not mean that people cannot aspire, or strive, to have better things, but that it is done within the context of contentment, not out of a covetous heart. And the author next shows that this state of contentment is possible because the believer has the Source of all other things as his own. He says, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

This is not a direct quote from any verse, but an adaptation of the thought from various verses such as –

“Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”
Genesis 28:15

“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

“No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.” Joshua 1:5

The idea of the author's words is faithfully expressed in these thoughts, so that when he says, "He Himself has said," it is an assurance that it is true for the believer who reads the words and understands the nature of God in His dealings with His people. In this is another verse which speaks of the eternal security of the believer. God will never leave nor forsake His people. It is an unconditional statement. Our faithlessness does not negate His faithfulness.

Life application: In this verse as a stand-alone, meaning without the connection to impurity of the previous verse, there are still two complete thoughts which are united in a single concept. The Bible speaks a great deal about the trap of money and greed. This includes the sayings of Jesus personally. In fact, the two thoughts here are in the same basic order and idea of what Jesus said in Matthew 6 –

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24

&

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Matthew 6:25, 26

If our focus is on money, it becomes our trust. When we place our trust in anything but the Lord, there is no true foundation. Even if the money doesn't disappear, we don't know the timing of our death. Therefore, the money we have saved will be of no use to us when death does come. To trust in money or riches is simply the fool's path. Instead, God – through Jesus Christ – promises to never leave us and to never forsake us. This is a promise by the unchanging God who cannot lie. His word reflects His very nature. So don't be frustrated about your finances which are set to end in one way or another. Instead, rejoice in your relationship with God through Christ which is eternal.

Thank You Lord for those most comforting verses of Scripture where You give us a sure guarantee that You are with us in whatever our life's station is. Help us to be content where we are, even while we strive to improve our lot. Help us to never lose sight of the truth that all things are from You and serve Your purposes for us. Thank You for Your abundant provision and protection! Amen.

So we may boldly say:

“The Lord *is* my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?” Hebrews 13:6

Here we have a quote from Psalm 118:6 –

“The Lord *is* on my side;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?”

The same sentiment is also reflected in Psalm 27:1.

The author has just stated in the previous verse, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” It is with that thought in mind that he next jubilantly proclaims, “So we may boldly say.”

If the Lord is with us, and if He will never leave us nor forsake us, then our conduct shouldn't be that of timidity, but of boldness. That includes the words we speak. The author is spurring the reader on in his words to a state of confident boldness. In this, he then reaches back to the psalm, as noted above, and says, “The Lord is my helper.”

Why would we be covetous, and why would we walk in a state of discontentment? Whatever our state is, it is because the Lord has ordained it. For example, we are all destined to die. Why would we fear death if the Lord has already gone ahead of us through that door? Rather, the author continues the quote with, "I will not fear."

This should be the attitude of the believer in any situation. If death, which is the end of this life, is not to be feared, then why should we fear any part of the life we live prior to death? Our trust in God is not a dubious grasp on something that may or may not be worked out for our best interest. Rather, because Christ Jesus is God's Son, and because we are in Christ, we are God's children through adoption. As His children, He is there for us, He is watching over us, and He will protect us as a Father. This is the reason for the final words, "What can man do to me?"

The answer for those who look to this world as the sum total of our existence is, "A whole lot." Man can take our possessions, he can harm our family, he can physically hurt us or even kill us. But those things are a part of a temporary existence for the believer.

This verse is not a statement guaranteeing that believers will be immune from any of these things. It is a statement that transcends them. We will face these things in varying degrees, but they are not an indication of the Father's failure to care for us. They are a part of what the Father has allowed in order to mold us for the life which is truly life.

Psalm 118 is a victorious psalm which speaks of the coming Messiah. Because that psalm is being applied to us because of Jesus' victory, we have absolute assurance that no thing, no person, no trial, and no temptation can hold us down. In fact, we should say with confidence that it is Jesus who stands with us, and because of that, we will not be afraid. It is this thought which has allowed people to undergo torture and martyrdom without disowning Christ. The early Christian martyr named Polycarp was given a chance to disown Christ and confess Caesar as lord, but he stood firm instead –

“Eighty-six years have I been His servant, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me? ... You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.”

Although most of us probably won't face being burned at the stake, whatever trials you do face – large or small – remember that the Lord is your confidence and so you should never be afraid of what lies ahead.

Yes Lord, You are our great confidence in a world which is lacking reason. Give us the ability to stand fast in Your great comfort when times become difficult or even hostile. May You receive the glory You are due for having provided us with such a sure and great salvation. Amen.

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct. Hebrews 13:7

Here, we move to a positive exhortation from the author to “Remember those who rule over you.” The idea is one who directs, or guides, the congregation. The word is *hégeomai*, and it forms the basis for our modern word “hegemony.” It signifies one who carries important responsibility. Here it is in the passive, and so the thought is “to esteem/reckon heavily” (HELPS Word Studies).

In remembering them, those who are so led should consider them, be willing to submit to them, follow after them, and so on. This is specifically speaking of those “who have spoken the word of God to you.” This is an obvious reference to those who teach, preach, and provide instruction when called upon to do so. As they are the ones to impart the spiritual truths to others, it would normally be expected that they would be men of faith, and faithful in their conduct before the Lord. Because of this, the author says, “whose faith follow.”

It is a way of imploring the reader to look at the faith their leaders profess, and to act in a like manner. The word “follow” signifies “to imitate.” Obviously, if they are prone to acting in a less than desirable manner, one would not want to follow in their ways, but this is a general sentiment, given to encourage following those who are faithful. This is then certain because of the final words, “considering the outcome of *their* conduct.”

The word used is a rare one, being found elsewhere only in 1 Corinthians 10:13, and in Hebrews 11:15. It signifies “a way out” or “result.” The idea here then is that they are the type who are faithful unto death. Whether dead or not, the idea of being faithful even under the most dire circumstances is what appears to be what is referred to here. Knowing the character of such a person, the reader is implored to act in a similar manner.

Life application: There are a lot of people vying for our attention in the world – sports figures, politicians, movie stars, etc. We are told here that we should look to our preachers and teachers in the word when looking for a way of life to emulate.

If anyone hasn't taken the time to notice, much of the Hollywood elite are the most messed up people on earth. Sports figures spend too much time working on their athletic skills, which fade with age, and not enough on considering the deeper questions of life. Politicians are generally the most self-serving bunch of people of all.

Instead, we need to look to those who preach the word of God and consider their way of life. What they preach, if preached properly, has eternal significance and is the only sure foundation we have. Along with this, we are reminded to imitate what we see in them.

It should be understood that we only imitate what is noble in them, not specifically the person himself. To imitate a fallen person – even a pastor – isn't smart. Pastors have been known to fall too – in big ways. The only One we are to

wholly imitate in person is Jesus, but for earthly examples of faith, we look to our pastors. In addition to this, Paul reminded Timothy that –

“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, ‘The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.’” 1 Timothy 5:17, 18

He repeats his thought in Galatians 6:6 –

“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”

Don’t forget to share the good you have with your pastor. And again, learn to imitate his faith.

Lord, you have raised up God-fearing men to teach Your word and to direct us to You. Give us caring hearts to pray for them, to acknowledge them with our gifts, and to imitate their faith. Help us always to be faithful congregants in support of those who lead us and who in turn lead us to You! Amen.

Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8

The structure of the Greek original is much more expressive and beautiful. The NKJV, following after that of the KJV, is slipshod and conveys an incorrect idea about what the author is saying. As Albert Barnes notes concerning their translation –

“It would seem to mean that Jesus Christ, the unchangeable Saviour, was the end or aim of the conduct of those referred to, or that they lived to imitate and glorify him. But this is by no means the meaning in the original.”

Young’s Literal Translation renders it according to the Greek structure – “Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day the same, and to the ages” (YLT).

The words of this verse are a connector between what was said in the previous verse and what is coming in the next. As seen, the author used a rare word in the previous verse which gave the thought that those who led the congregation were “faithful unto death.” That is reflected in the words, “Jesus Christ yesterday.” They had understood Him to be Messiah (Christ) and were faithful to that. The same is true of “Today.”

Whatever day is “Today,” Jesus Christ is the same as yesterday. There is no change in Him and His power and authority. He remains the Messiah and, therefore, the believer is to express the same faithful conduct as those who trusted in Him before. He remains the same, and therefore we are to not deviate in our allegiance to Him. From there, the author says, “and to the ages.”

The eternal nature of Jesus Christ’s Person, Position, and Power is referred to. This verse is an absolute statement of the eternal and unchanging nature of Jesus Christ. Therefore, our relation to Him is to be unwavering and consistent. We serve an immutable Lord and our conduct before Him, and our trust in Him, should reflect that.

This premise will lead into the coming verse which speaks of not getting caught up in strange doctrines. Christ is unchanging. Therefore, the doctrines associated with Him will be firm, fixed, and unchanging as well.

Life application: This is one of many verses in the Bible which tell us of God's (because Christ Jesus is God) unchanging nature. This may seem like an unimportant aspect of God that you don't need to think about deeply, but such isn't the case. The eternity and unchanging nature of God leads us directly to monotheism and excludes all other non-monotheistic religion. It is that simple.

Because Jesus is being equated with an unchanging nature, then He is a part of the Godhead. If this is so, and the Bible claims it is, then any other monotheistic expression outside of Christianity is excluded. We can easily reason out why this must be the case and why the other monotheistic religions are false – for example, Islam's system of final justice would violate God's eternal nature of holiness.

By using reason, the Bible alone stands as an expression compatible with the nature of God. In a world where so many people believe that "all paths lead to God," there needs to be careful thought given as to why this simply cannot be true. And, once we have determined the truth, we can be completely assured that we are dealing with the God who isn't fickle, vindictive, moody, or changing. His word reflects His very nature.

It would be utterly foolish to claim faith in Jesus Christ and then worry about somehow losing your salvation at a later point. When God says that we are forgiven through Christ, then we are forgiven. When God says that we have reconciliation because of Christ, then we are reconciled. When God says we are His children because of Christ, then we are adopted and heirs. Have faith that Jesus is the same God who said, "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6).

Jesus is the full expression of the Godhead in bodily form. He makes the unknowable knowable. Have no fear; Jesus is.

Thank You Lord for coming and displaying to us the great love of the Father! Thank You for our salvation, our adoption, and our promised eternal life. Because Your word tells us of Jesus and Jesus tells us of these things, we can be eternally confident that they are true. Thank You for Jesus! Amen.

Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.* Hebrews 13:9

The verse consists of two sentences, the second explaining the reason for the first. However, the first, all by itself is a good warning under any situation, “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.” Unfortunately, “sensation sells.” People make up all kinds of nutty things, teaching them as if they were biblically sound. But because the average Christian spends less time reading his Bible than he does getting holes drilled in his head, there is no way for that individual to discern what is sound and what is not.

Hence, throughout the Christian world, “various and strange doctrines” abound. The reason for there being thousands of different denominations is because the Bible is misinterpreted, misrepresented, or completely ignored. Thus, churches are filled with various doctrines. And many of those doctrines are strange, even to the point of having nothing to do with biblical theology. Further, there is the thought that “everyone is a specialist in theology.”

People hear something, no matter how outlandish, and they latch on to it, immediately teaching what they have heard as if it were sound, even if it is completely aberrant. The problem with this is that, without their knowing the Bible, there is no way to show that person that he is, in fact, completely wrong. But sound theology takes hard work, much time, and careful contemplation. None of these are palatable to the one whose ears desire tickling.

Paul speaks of “every wind of doctrine” in Ephesians 4:14, imploring his reader to not get caught up in that which is contrary to sound doctrine, and which comes “by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Believers are to hold to that which is sound and reasonable. Not strange and goofy.

Having said that, and as already stated, the second sentence explains the first. The author is specifically referring to foods. As will be seen, those foods are then tied into the sacrificial system of Israel. This means that the author is comparing the grace of Christ to the mandates of the Law of Moses, a law which has already and explicitly been said to be annulled (7:18), obsolete (8:13), and taken away (10:9).

And so he says, “For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace.” Grace is unmerited favor. It is what Christ provided through the giving (sacrifice) of His life for man’s sin. As it is unmerited, it cannot be earned, only received. With that thought in mind, he then says, “not with foods.”

The sacrificial and dietary laws of Israel are not grace. They are law. Certain animals were acceptable, certain animals were not. This is true with both individual dietary issues, mandated for all under the law, and also for acceptable sacrifices and offerings to the Lord, in which the offerer often participated. Of this system of regulations for Israel, he continues by saying, “which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.”

The Greek more literally reads, “in which they who walked were not profited.” The “walk” reflects the conduct of one’s life. Paul uses the term often, such as in Ephesians 4:17 when speaking of the “walk” of the Gentiles. In this case, the author is referring to the “walk” or “conduct of life” under the law and in regard to the “foods which have not profited” those who walked in accord with those laws. The things they did were only external rituals which anticipated the coming of Christ. He is the embodiment and fulfillment of the law, and in Him is found the end of those things. He accomplished for His people the things which bring restoration with God.

The thought being conveyed here is very similar to that of Paul in 1 Timothy 4. There he says that there are those who are “forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” In other words, he is speaking of those who reinsert the precepts of the Law of Moses, or who simply make up dietary and other laws, and then impose those faulty standards on others who are uneducated in what “grace” means.

The message of Hebrews is in perfect agreement with all of Paul’s teachings. It is one unified message that the believer in Christ is not under law, but is under grace.

Life application: The first half of this verse is so broad in its admonition that pages and pages could be written about the strange teachings followed by a single individual, much less everyone in the church. We as people can so easily get sidetracked into cults, conspiracies, speculations, and general finger-pointing that we never become productive Christians.

How many times do you see people waste their time on every possible conspiracy that arises? “The government is building concentration camps for its citizens.” “The twin towers were destroyed by the US government.” “The government is imposing Noahide laws on its people – beheadings are just around the corner.” On and on it goes as we waste our lives on that which is both strange and unproductive.

Likewise, how many know someone who has come home to tell the family they have joined the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, or Adventists because they are the only truth and have the secrets of God exclusively. Strange teachings are teachings which have no value in our lives and merely divert our attention from Jesus. Those who follow them can only be pitied as they dig deeper and deeper into one giant black chasm of futility.

One of the strange teachings, which is a serious misapplication of the Bible, is the re-imposition of dietary laws. Rather than these things, we are to be “strengthened by grace” and not in legalistic teachings. Christ has (past tense) accepted us. To try to merit His favor through our diet after He has already accepted us is to lack being strengthened by grace. Eyes on Jesus! Thoughts on Jesus! Hearts toward Jesus! Everything else is foolish and wasteful.

Lord, help us to think on what is of value in our spiritual lives. Nudge us to ask, “Is this a strange teaching which is of no value?” And then give us wisdom to reject it if it is. May our hearts and minds be attentive to You and not toward that which is off the beaten path, rather crazy, or just plain nuts. May we be pleasing to You through sound biblical doctrine. Amen.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. Hebrews 13:10

The translation lacks the intent of what is being referred to. A better translation would be –

“We have an altar from which those who worship at the tent have no right to eat.”

This is not merely speaking of the priests who served at the tabernacle, but of all of Israel who came to make their offerings at the Tent of Meeting. In this, the people at times participated in eating a portion of the offering. This is seen, for example, in Deuteronomy 12 –

“You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. ¹⁸ But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God

chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who *is* within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all to which you put your hands.” Deuteronomy 12:17, 18

At other times, the sacrifices or offerings were eaten by the priests alone, and at times, they were wholly burnt to the Lord on the altar, etc. Each type of sacrifice and offering had its own requirement as to its disposal. These were brought forward to the Tent of Meeting and offered on the brazen altar. This is now set in contrast to what is found in Christ with the author’s words, “We have an altar.”

There are various ideas about what “the altar” in the New Covenant signifies. Some say it is the cross of Christ. Some say it is the table where believers participate in the Lord’s Supper. Some say it is Christ Himself. However, the idea of the altar is that of symbolizing everything associated with the work of Christ in one unified concept. Just as the offering upon the brazen altar signified the offering of the people, the food of the priests, access through the door of the Tent of Meeting, the symbolic restored relationship with God etc., so the entire picture of life in Christ and full restoration with God, is gathered up in one thought called the “altar.”

It is this “altar from which those who worship at the tent have no right to eat.” The two covenants are mutually exclusive of one another. One is either under law, or he is under grace. One is either obedient in following the commands given through Moses, or he is obedient to the commands given through Christ. The commands of Christ, however, are not inclusive of the Law of Moses as many people claim. This is evident from 1 Corinthians 7:19 –

“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters.*”

This is obviously the case because circumcision is specifically referred to in the Old Covenant (Leviticus 12:3). Therefore, the New Covenant is a completely separate and distinct body of commands than that of the Old Covenant, even if some of

those commands overlap because they are repeated in the New. Because of this, the altar of Christ excludes any who participate in the altar of the Old Covenant. One must leave the Jewish teachings and come solely and completely to Christ in order to first be saved, and then to be pleasing to Him. This is the main topic of the book of Galatians. It warns against the Judaizers of all ages.

As a note concerning the dating of Hebrews, “the altar” is speaking of that which is discussed above and which occurred in Jerusalem. This, like an earlier verse in Hebrews, confirms that the temple was still standing at the time of this letter and so the letter was written prior to AD 70. This is important because liberal theology will often try to date biblical books later than they were written in order to argue against their truth.

Life application: Hebrews shows that believers in Christ have something that any associated with the temple rites and rituals had no right to. When the people of Israel failed to come to Christ, they were left out of the New Covenant promises, including its eternal blessings. We can only be thankful for God’s mercy in selecting us for inclusion in the Bread from heaven, our Lord Jesus. The altar from which we partake includes His precious body and blood – given for us. When you participate in the Lord’s Supper, do you take time to appreciate its enormous significance?

Lord, because of what You did at Calvary, we have the right to come in and dine with You. May we never take for granted that which You did on our behalf, but rather help us to appreciate Your greatness even more as we share in the Table set before us which remembers Your death until You come again. To the glory of God the Father... Amen.

For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Hebrews 13:11

The verbs are in the present tense, indicating that the temple was still standing, and that the sacrifices mentioned here were ongoing. Further, as Hebrews is also directed toward the Jews of the end times (as seen in earlier commentaries), it is an indication that a temple will again be built, and that these sacrifices will again be conducted. As they are already being accomplished in practice runs, it is merely a matter of time before this comes about. Concerning these sacrifices, the author says, “For the bodies of those animals.”

This is speaking of the sacrificial system of Israel, not merely animals slaughtered for consumption throughout the land. The sacrificial system is detailed particularly in Leviticus, but it is referred to in other books as well. Now to explain that he is talking about specific sacrifices, he continues with, “whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest.”

The translation, if consistent with Old Testament usage, would say, “whose blood is brought into the tabernacle.” The “sanctuary” is the entire compound of the Lord’s dwelling. The Tent of Meeting is the main edifice within the compound, and the tabernacle is within the Tent of Meeting. It is a specific place within the tabernacle – meaning the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place – that is being referred to.

Many types of sacrifices and offerings were brought to the sanctuary, but only a very select number of them were brought into the Holy Place. An even smaller number were brought into the Most Holy Place. Each was for a very specific reason, and each and every reason pointed to the cleansing power of Christ to come. These were mere shadows and types which looked forward to what He would do for His people. To understand this sacrificial system, and to understand the particular rituals now being described, please take time to read or watch all of the Superior Word sermons from the book of Leviticus.

The author continues with the thought that the blood of these animals, which were brought forth by the high priest, was “for sin.” As noted, different sacrifices had different things done with the blood, with the parts of the animal, and so on. Some blood was splashed upon the altar, some blood was carried into the tabernacle to be sprinkled, etc. Each was for a specific purpose. Those that were “for sin,” were handled according to “who” sinned and the surrounding circumstances of the sin offering. However, when the blood was carried into the tabernacle by the high priest, those animals were not eaten by the priests. Rather, they were “burned outside the camp.”

It must be explained here that not all sin offerings were wholly burnt outside the camp. Those whose blood was not taken inside the tabernacle had certain parts of the animal burnt on the brazen altar, but the meat of the animal was consumed by the priests. That was because, in this, the priests typified Christ. They became the “sin eaters.” The animal, representing the sin, was consumed by the priests and eliminated. This is seen, for example, in Leviticus 10:16-18.

However, the sin offerings where the blood was taken into the tabernacle included the sin of the priests, therefore, the entire animal was burnt outside the camp. This signified that the priests could not remove their own sin. If they did eat the sacrifice, it would symbolize taking their sin back into themselves. The burning of the animal looked forward to the only possible cleansing for their sin, which is the perfect sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Only He can remove such sin. Israel’s rejection of Christ was the reason for its destruction and exile.

They had rejected their only true means of atonement, and they were thus defiled and excluded from their previous rights and privileges before God. Until the leaders of Israel acknowledge Christ as their only true sin-offering, they cannot be forgiven, as a collective whole, of their national sin. Only those individuals who come to Christ – apart from the collective whole – will receive His forgiveness. This will continue to be explained in the verses ahead.

Life application: Anytime something was taken “outside the camp,” it was for reasons of impurity. People with diseases were kept there, blasphemers were taken there and stoned, those who died were taken there, etc. In the case of the sin offering mentioned above, sin was transferred to the animal. The blood proved the death of the animal which indicated that the transfer had taken place and that a life was forfeit. Then the dead animal’s carcass was taken outside the camp to remove the taint of the sin which had been transferred, thus keeping it from defiling people or implements.

The question for you is, “How will your sin be removed?” People have devised a thousand times ten thousand different religions, trying to develop the perfect way of removing their sin, and all of them have failed. Why? It is because they fail to see that sin already exists in all human beings. Only a sinless human being could be acceptable to take away the sin of man. The sacrificial system of Israel, which looks forward to Jesus Christ, clearly shows the truth of “inherited sin.” Offering a baby for one’s sin doesn’t remove sin. Instead, it only commits another sin. Think on what the Bible is revealing, and come to Christ who alone can remove sin from your stained soul.

Heavenly Father, the book of Hebrews is such a gift! It helps us to understand more clearly the purpose of many Old Testament books, and it shows us how they pointed to Jesus. Thank you for giving us such beautiful insights into what was, what is, and what is coming because of His grand and glorious work! Amen.

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Hebrews 13:12

The word “Therefore” is given based on what was said in the preceding verse. The bodies of the animals which were given for sin were “burned outside the camp.” That was given to show that the sins had been taken away from the people, outside of the area where God dwelt in the holy city, and were thus removed from them. When the animal was burned, the sins were symbolically completely

removed and could not be brought back to memory and counted against the people again. The rising of the smoke symbolized this.

Israel was considered God's holy people. He dwelt in their presence, and anything which defiled was to be removed from that glorious presence. This was accomplished in this way as a picture of what Christ would do in reality. It didn't actually accomplish this, but it was granted to the people as a temporary institution until Christ came to fulfill the types and shadows. In that, their faith looked forward to the coming work of Messiah; our faith looks back to what He has accomplished.

In fulfillment of this particular picture, the author then says, "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate." This is recorded in the gospels, such as –

"Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. ³³ And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink." Matthew 27:32-34

&

"Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin." John 19:20

Even this seemingly obscure precept from the Law of Moses was fulfilled exactly by Jesus. He was taken outside the city, bearing the sins of the world upon Himself, and away from the Presence which was in the temple. The typology was fulfilled, and the true forgiveness which Israel only anticipated under the Law of Moses was realized.

Life application: What was said in Hebrews 9 should be recalled in this verse. Christ entered the more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, and He did it

not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood. In this, we were told that He obtained for us eternal redemption.

Jesus' blood was presented in the true Most Holy Place, proving His death. However, His body suffered outside the city gate as a symbol that it was unclean because of receiving our sins; it was removed from the people. Consider this as you contemplate the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21 –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Think on the significance of what occurred and how far God went to reconcile us to Himself. If you fully grasp what happened, how can you not devote your very self to honoring and giving glory – forever – to this One who loves you so much? The Creator of the vastness of the universe sent His Son to become sin so that You might become the righteousness of God in Him – simply unimaginable!

O God, thank You for Jesus. Amen.

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

Hebrews 13:13

This verse is given based on the preceding verses. Together, they read –

“For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

The only sacrifice which was made outside the sanctuary (and even outside the camp) was the red heifer recorded in Numbers 19. That is not what is being considered here when speaking of the sprinkling of blood inside the sanctuary. All of the others were sacrificed in the sanctuary itself. What happened to their blood, and the disposal of their bodies, was based upon what type of sacrifice (or offering) was made and who it was being applied to.

In the case of these verses, the blood was carried inside the tabernacle itself, meaning either into the holy place or the most holy place. This indicates a sin offering, and one which included the high priest himself as a part of the acknowledged guilt. The body of that animal was then taken outside the camp and burned.

However, these verses state that in Jesus' sanctification of people with his own blood, He "suffered outside the gate." Unlike these animals that died in the sanctuary and only then were their bodies taken out to be burned, Christ both suffered and died outside of the gates. The obvious indication is that atonement from sin through Christ did not, and cannot, come through the offerings made by the high priest of Israel and at the tabernacle (or temple) which was among the people. Rather, those things were only types and shadows of what occurred in Christ's fulfillment of the law.

Christ's blood was not sprinkled in an earthly holy (or most holy) place. Rather, this shows the importance of what was recorded in Chapter 9 –

"But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions

under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Hebrews 9:11-15

Christ “entered the Most Holy Place” with His own blood. The point, then, of the author’s words is that if one wants to participate in Christ, he must do so not through the rituals or observances of the Old Covenant (which He fulfilled), but he must come to Christ apart from those things. The “camp” speaks of everything associated with the law and how one is considered “holy” under the law. To go “outside the camp” is to go to a place that the law would consider unclean! And yet, the author says to go to Him outside the camp.

Christ died outside the camp, bearing reproach. This means that He was considered an unclean thing. But it is only that state of uncleanness that can purify from defilement. How can that be? The answer is found in the mystery of the red heifer (mentioned above). Only the red heifer was noted as being burned with its blood. To understand this, one is implored to read (or watch) the two sermons on Numbers 19 given at the Superior Word. In understanding this, the answer becomes evident.

The author now asks the people to come outside the camp, forsaking the law, except as it is fulfilled in Christ, and to be saved by faith in what Christ did, not in what we can do under the law. And this applies to both Jew and Gentile. It is what is warned against, time and again, in the book of Acts, in Paul’s letters, and here in Hebrews. Do not let law observance be found in your attempt to please God. In doing so, you are disgracing the fulfilled work of Christ. It is He who fulfilled the law. Do you think you are more capable than He? Let it go! Come to Christ, and bear his reproach! Be sprinkled in the only truly purifying way. Be sprinkled by Christ.

Life application: The Bible makes this statement –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Think it through, carefully. God – our Creator, and He who had no sin – Jesus, fully God and fully Man, was made to be sin. He bore the disgrace of our misconduct and moral deficiency, so that in Him – that broken and rejected body – we (insert your name here if you have accepted the transfer) might become the righteousness of God – reconciled through the cross of our innocent Lord – to bear His righteousness when we instead deserved His cross.

Who can imagine the immensity of what is being said here? That God would give us His own jealously-guarded righteousness after the lives we have lived. All of our sin was laid upon Christ who then bore our disgrace, our sin, and our rebellion.

The love of God which is in Christ Jesus is far above our ability to ever pen a note of thanks sufficient to the deed. Look to this wonderful implement of death and reconciliation, and then call on the name of the Lord, the Lord Jesus.

See the hands pierced for me

See His feet held to the tree

See His side, the spear received

How precious the transfer, when I believed

Thank You my Lord, my Savior, My God

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

Hebrews 13:14

Here we are reminded of the promise which has already been stated twice. In verse 11:10, Abraham was said to wait “for the city with foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” Verse 12:22 then specified what that city is by saying, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

The words, “For we have no continuing city,” are speaking of the current Jerusalem and everything associated with it, meaning the law, the temple, the sacrifices, and so on. Everything about that was a part of the types and shadows which looked to Christ, but it is earthly and temporary.

For those who “go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach,” there is a better hope. Those who leave the life of Judaism behind, to pursue what was promised by God in Christ, have suffered no loss at all. They have, in fact, gained heaven. As the author says, “but we seek the one to come.”

As has been stated numerous times, the book is written to the Hebrews. It is referring to their life before God. It is not exclusive of the Gentiles who have come to Christ, but verses like this one speak of life under the law, life of those who have rejected Christ and pursue Judaism as a means to an end, and so on. It is true that those Gentiles who have been duped into this “Hebrew Roots Movement,” like those who follow the Judaizers of all ages, are putting themselves in the same position. However, this letter is specifically given to the Hebrew people to leave Jerusalem of this earth behind, and to seek the one which is to come.

That is the eternal home for God’s people, and it is the replacement of that which is temporary and which has no true foundations.

Life application: What keeps you from being an active, faithful, and heartfelt follower of Jesus Christ? Really, think it over. What is it that robs your joy? What is it that steals your attention? What is it that you cherish having, or cherish doing, above all else? Every single thing and every single person around you is part of a decaying system and is temporary at best.

For the believer in Christ – Jew or Gentile – our current “camp” can be equated to where we reside in this world – surrounded by the things which hold our attention and which deprive us of time spent with the Creator. Understand that all things He gave us are blessings for which we should be grateful. By being grateful for them, we are including Him in the process. However, when He is excluded because of

whatever has completely captivated us, we are forgetting the fundamental truth that only He can truly satisfy.

The Bible asks us to go to Him outside the camp and not worry about, or be consumed by, the things of this world. If we can emulate Christ now, how insignificant is the cost compared to that which is prepared.

Thank You Heavenly Father for the promise of an enduring city! One where things will never wear out, people won't grow sick and die, and especially one where we will be Your people and You will be our God – in Your very presence. Until that day, give us steadfast hearts to bear any disgrace for the eternally exalted name of Jesus. Amen.

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. Hebrews 13:15

The words should state, “through Him,” not “by Him.” It is through Christ Jesus that God’s people are to “continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God.” This is a direct link to the thank (also known as “fellowship”) offerings that were offered under the Law of Moses. The same word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Leviticus 7:12 where that offering is named. It was through such an offering that such praises were ordained. Later, it is then used in Psalm 50:14 (and elsewhere) in the sense of giving praise to God –

“Offer to God thanksgiving,
And pay your vows to the Most High.”

Unlike the sacrifices for sin and trespass, which looked to restoration between God and His people, a peace offering was made for the preservation of the relationship. People would make these offerings. A portion of them was burnt

upon the altar to God, and a portion was eaten by the offerer. In this, there was a meal being enjoyed between the two. This is somewhat analogous to our taking of the Lord's Supper now. The author is showing that in praising God through Jesus, we are offering "the fruit of our lips."

In this, similar terminology is found in the Proverbs and Hosea –

"A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth;
From the produce of his lips he shall be filled." Proverbs 18:20

&

"Take words with you,
And return to the Lord.
Say to Him,
'Take away all iniquity;
Receive *us* graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.'" Hosea 14:2

The idea of the "fruit of the lips," or the "sacrifice of the lips," is that which is produced through the lips. When one speaks something vile, that is what is produced. When one speaks praises to God, that is what is produced. To praise God, through Jesus, is considered as a peace-offering to God in that it is pleasing to Him. This is then acknowledged as "giving thanks to His name."

In properly worshiping the Creator in this way, it is showing reverence for the plan which He orchestrated for the redemption of man, and which He alone has credit for. As this is through the giving of His Son, it is an acknowledgment that He ordained the plan, He set it in motion, He participated in it, and He carried it through to its completion – all through Christ. As Paul says –

“Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:19

All the glory goes to God, and therefore all the praises are to go to Him in acknowledgment of that. Whereas all sacrifices and offerings mandated under the Law of Moses are complete, the praises of God, which the peace offering symbolized, will never cease. The praises of God will ring forth for all eternity.

Life application: Here we have several huge concepts.

1. In order to please God, we praise Him *through* Jesus. This is not an idea unique to this verse, but is repeated throughout the New Testament. It clearly and unambiguously means that no other avenue of praise to God is meaningful. We cannot praise Him through Mary or the saints; through Buddha, Allah, or Vishnu; nor can we do it directly without a mediator. Instead, it is through Jesus that praise is acceptable to God.
2. Praise isn't meant for a specific time of the week – a Sabbath, a single day of worship, or a specific location. Instead, praise is something to do *continually*. If you hurt yourself – say a badly stubbed toe – you can call out, “Thank You Jesus that it wasn't a broken hip.” In other words, we can – even in the most trying times – praise God for the greater trial that didn't come.
3. God looks at praise as a sacrifice! We don't need to fast, give money to a cause, spend excessive time helping others, or be creative with our skills in order to be pleasing to God (although we can also do these things for His glory). Instead, God looks at our true praises as sacrifices in and of themselves. As the 54th psalm says –

“I will freely sacrifice to You;
I will praise Your name, O Lord, for *it is good*.” Psalm 54:6

And again, as a means of repaying the kindness of our salvation, the psalmist says

—

“What shall I render to the Lord
For all His benefits toward me?
¹³ I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the Lord.” Psalm 116:12, 13

There is truly no other thing we can do to “repay” God. Paul says as much in Romans 11:35. Instead, we sacrifice to God through our praises. I’ll bet a jillion dollars that if you spend your time finding reasons to praise Him at all times, you’ll be healthier, happier, and more filled with heaven than you can imagine. In all things, remember to praise the Lord.

Praise the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in his mighty heavens. Praise Him for his acts of power; praise Him for his surpassing greatness. Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with tambourine and dancing, praise Him with the strings and flute, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. Hallelujah and Amen!

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Hebrews 13:16

The word “But” is given as an additive to what was just stated. The author had told the people to offer the sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to His name. Along with that (But), he now adds the thought that the believer should “not forget to do good and to share.”

What this means is that we have a vertical responsibility towards God, and yet at the same time we have a horizontal responsibility to those around us. We are not simply to offer lip service to God, praising Him and giving thanks to His name while, at the same time, ignoring what He expects of us towards those around us.

The words, “to do good,” are so general that they must be taken in relation to how we would expect to be treated by others. As Jesus said –

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:12

If you would want someone else to let you into the traffic line, you should allow the person trying to get into the traffic line in. If you see someone who is struggling with his load, help him to carry it. Doing good is something that makes the one who does good feel good as well, and so there is a two-way benefit. However, the thought of immediate benefit for self will often push out any thought of a later possible benefit. This needs to be actively overcome by remembering “to do good.”

Further, the author says, “and to share.” This is actually, more often than not, tied to doing good. If we allow someone into the traffic line in front of us, we are sharing our good position in that line. If we help someone with a heavy load, we are sharing our strength. If you have food to share with someone who obviously could use a bite, share your food. It is such an easy thing to simply look around and see other humans as you would like them to see and relate to you.

And with such a simple thing being practiced, we can then feel good not only about ourselves, and towards the other person we have tended to, but there is a third – and great – reason for this type of conduct. It is because “with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” God was under no obligation to send Jesus to bear our sin-debt. But He did. He took our heavy burden upon Himself.

When we were stuck on the path to hell, he allowed us access to the way of heaven. When we had no food to sustain us, He gave us the Bread of Life. God did good and shared all things with us because it pleased Him to do so (Isaiah 53:10). With this infinitely glorious example, we can then remember to follow suit, and to do likewise in our temporary stay here in this life. In such conduct, there will be eternal reward.

Life application: The problem (well, one of many problems) with liberal social theology is that it puts the “deeds cart” before the “salvation horse.” People all over the world are doing good deeds for others. If Christians think they have an exclusive claim on them, they are mistaken.

People like Bill Gates and other philanthropists give away as much as entire nations. Unfortunately, these deeds mean absolutely nothing to God in determining their righteousness. One simply cannot buy his way into heaven.

Likewise, liberal social theology follows a similar path. Such adherents tend to place people’s needs at the front of the list of things to be accomplished. In fact, this is often all that is on the list. They never get to the part about Jesus. The entire effort is wasted effort because the root of the people’s problem is a separation from God because of sin.

Feeding these people without tending to their spiritual needs is no different than petting a cow as it is going to slaughter...kind of pointless. Another problem with social theology is these people tend to get their fingers into the government entities around them and force themselves and their viewpoints on others who may have better-aligned priorities.

Such is the case in America where these ideologies have formed religious/political machines who never introduce Jesus. The Bible, on the other hand, never fails to proclaim our need for God’s pardon through Jesus and only then sharing with others. This is quite evident from the fact that we have spent 13 chapters on

Christology and only in the middle of the 13th chapter do we introduce charity. Once our station with Christ is resolved, we can then please God with our charity.

Don't be captivated by ministries which spend so much time doing good that they never get to the reason for the good. Without Jesus, the effort is in vain, but with Him it makes all the difference in the world.

Lord God, help us to have our priorities right as we seek to help others. Let us never shirk from first explaining the Gospel of Christ as we also tend to their other needs – physical, emotional, mental, financial, etc. May You be proclaimed at all times and in every way! Amen.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

The beginning of this verse closely parallels the words of verse 13:7, now forming the end of a section concerning leadership. The two clauses say –

Remember those who rule over you. 13:7

Obey those who rule over you. 13:17

Not only are we to remember those who rule over us, considering their faith and walk of life, but we are to be obedient to them as well. In obedience, we are to “be submissive.” The word is unique to Scripture, *hupeikó*. It signifies yielding to another and submitting to his authority.

The context here is that of religious leaders, not the civil leaders. The issue of submission to civil leadership, and the reason for it, is dealt with by Paul in Romans 13. Further, this does not mean that believers are to yield to the authority of someone who is in violation of the precepts of Scripture. Thus, the importance of knowing the word is implied here. One cannot discern when a leader is in the wrong if he does not have at least a reasonable knowledge of the word of God.

However, assuming the leader is leading appropriately, there is to be submission to him. The author says this is appropriate because “they watch out for your souls.” This means that when properly leading, they have the best intent for those under them in mind. As this is so, it would be counterproductive to not submit to them. One would suffer a self-inflicted wound. And more, the burden that a leader of God’s people carries is that they are “as those who must give account.”

This is speaking of their judgment before the Lord. All believers will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and receive reward or suffer loss (see Romans 14:10 & 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10). Those who fail to submit to their leaders (who are acting in accord with the word) will suffer loss for their failure to be submissive as directed. Those leaders who fail to care for the souls of their congregation will suffer loss for their inattentiveness towards those they are to care for. For those who fail to submit to their leader, this is perfectly reflected in the final two clauses of the verse where the author says, “Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

The first clause speaks of the well-being of the leader. They should be able to lead “with joy and not with grief.” The word “grief” here literally means “groaning.” It gives the idea of a feeling which is internal and remains unexpressed. One could think of the leader silently suffering over the conduct of those he is to care for.

The second clause speaks of the state of the believer who fails to give joy to the leader by saying, “for that would be unprofitable for you.” Where there is strife, disobedience, or animosity, there is grief (groaning). Where there is joy and contentment, there is profit for the subordinate. This is true in any situation.

Therefore, how much more should believers attempt to act in a proper manner in the body whose true Head is Christ!

Life application: Paul reminds us that our spiritual leaders should be both recognized and taken care of on several occasions –

“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.’” 1 Timothy 5:17, 18

&

“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” Galatians 6:6

Because of these, and many other areas in the Bible dealing with authority, we should watch ourselves and be careful when we deal with those above us. This isn’t always easy to do either. How often we find ourselves at variance with our bosses and political leaders – and even our pastors! When we disagree, it is good to voice our opinions, but it is not right to vent in a violent or abusive way. One finds out as he climbs the ladder that he will face the same dissension from his subordinates, often over trivial matters. So let us be sure that when we vent, it is done with consideration and also not over what is trivial.

Yes Lord, give us wise and discerning hearts concerning our leaders. Help us to disagree only when warranted, and even then with a spirit of respect and love. Help us to understand that their jobs aren’t all peaches and cream and that they carry a burden larger than we may know. Help us to be good subordinates for the sake of Jesus’ name. Amen.

Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. Hebrews 13:18

Of the final verses of the epistle, Charles Ellicott notes the structure and layout as mirroring that of Paul's other letters. For example, he says –

“The following verses—containing personal notices relating to the writer himself and his readers (Hebrews 13:18-19; Hebrews 13:22-23), a prayer on their behalf (Hebrews 13:20-21), a doxology (Hebrews 13:21), and brief salutations (Hebrews 13:24-25)—present many points of resemblance to the concluding sections in some of St. Paul's Epistles. The first words, “Pray for us,” are found in Colossians 4:3; 1Thessalonians 5:25; 2Thessalonians 3:1.”

Again, as has occurred numerous times throughout this letter, the hand of Paul is seen all over its contents. That, combined with Peter's words concerning Paul's letter to the same audience he was writing to (2 Peter 3:15), gives us the surest foundation that we are reading a letter by Paul, and thus it confirms that there is one unified message concerning the gospel to both Jew and Gentile. The contents of these letters are written to the Jews collectively at many times, but the underlying truths are for all. Thus, it is a clear refutation of the heretical doctrines of hyper- and ultra-dispensationalism which proclaim two gospels – one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles.

In the author's words now, he begins with, “Pray for us.” It is a good indication that the epistle was originally opened with a salutation stating the author's name, title (position), and who he was with, such as Paul frequently did. One example of this is –

“Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,

²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:" 1 Corinthians 1:1, 2

The plural "us" indicates that this is probably the case. And yet, the book of Hebrews does not include this salutation. An obvious question then would be, "Why?" The answer is because of the animosity of the Jews towards the name "Paul" which has been highlighted for the past 2000 years. From the earliest time after his conversion, he was considered a miscreant and his name is held in contempt by them just under the name of Jesus Himself.

As this is so, God included no name or greeting as a part of the inspired text as it would set up an immediate wall between a seeking Jewish reader and God's love for that person in His inspired words of the letter. "Pray for us" is the author's appeal for himself and those with him. The author here writes with the firm conviction that prayer is effective, and that in praying, God will hear and respond accordingly.

From there, the author gives the specific reason for his prayer request by saying, "for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably." The words here are similar to Paul's words of Acts 24:16 –

"This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men."

Here, the author asks for prayer because he knows that his actions have been proper, and that there is no conflict between his audience and their prayers for him and his associates. This is another excellent clue to Paul's authorship. As noted, there was a wall of animosity between Paul and the Hebrew people. This is evidenced throughout Acts, and the book ends on a note that Paul was – from that time on – going to the Gentiles (see Acts 28:28).

But the animosity was not because of Paul. He loved his brethren of the flesh (meaning the Jewish people) to such an extent that he would have seen himself cut off that they might be saved (see Romans 9:3). The animosity was because the Jews had rejected Christ, they had rejected Paul's message of Gentile inclusion in the New Covenant, and they had thus rejected Paul, speaking against him to the point that even the Jewish believers were wary of him and his message. It is the very reason that Peter had to step in and include Paul as being a true apostle of Jesus Christ.

Life application: The Bible mentions prayer over 350 times and infers it many other times as well. Prayer is not something to take trivially or to simply use in times of trial either. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "pray without ceasing" as we go about our lives. He also acknowledges elsewhere that the prayers of the many are effective. Corporate prayer has great weight.

Just because God knows the end from the beginning, it does not mean that He does not answer prayer. Rather, He knew all along whether we would pray or not. In the case of "not," nothing is factored into the equation. For those who do pray, He knew they would, and He has factored that in as well. Be confident that God does, in fact, hear your prayers, and that He will respond according to His infinite wisdom.

Lord, we praise You and thank You for Your wonderful word. Thank You for reminding us that prayer was needed for even the early apostles and that we also share in the privilege of being able to pray for others. Also, help us to be as those apostles – having a clear conscience and a desire to live honorably in every way. To Your glory alone! Amen.

But I especially urge *you* to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.
Hebrews 13:19

The author now explains why he said in the previous verse, “Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.” He is asking for prayers to be submitted more abundantly (as the Greek word implies) because something was hindering him from coming to them. As he says, “that I may be restored to you the sooner.” It is reflective of the words of Paul in Philemon 1:22 –

“But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.”

Whether the author is Paul, and whether he is speaking of being imprisoned personally, or whether he was limited in some other way, he is asking for prayers in order that he might be restored to those he is writing to once again. What is possible, but which is only speculation, is that if it is Paul, he is hindered because of his own disability which is evident in the book of Acts and in portions of his epistles.

He was conducted wherever he was led, traveling with others, and implying that he could not travel alone. This would fit well with Hebrews 13:23 which says, “Know that *our* brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.” With Timothy in prison, Paul would have been without his help in getting around. Now that Timothy was released, if he came to Paul, they could then travel together. Again, it is speculation, but it fits the character and needs of Paul well.

No matter what, the author is confident of the power of prayer, and he requests it for this specific purpose. Again, it is reminiscent of Paul’s writings –

“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me.” Romans 15:30

Life application: In this verse, the author lets us know something we have not had a clue about to this point. After all the beautiful analysis of the work of Christ, His superiority, His greatness, and His splendor – and after admonishing us to live proper lives in submission to our leaders – after all these things and so many others, only then does he finally get to his own needs.

He waited until he had put forth that which was of most importance to him before mentioning his own difficulty. It is a good lesson for all of us to consider. We may have needs, but are they the most important issue at the moment? In the author’s case, he didn’t think so.

Thank You Lord that no matter what happens to us here, we are safe in eternity with You. May it be our pleasure and honor to suffer for You should the time come. And may You receive all the glory You are due in the judgment of those who persecute Your people, or in their turning to You through watching and desiring to emulate our conduct as we suffer for You. Amen.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Hebrews 13:20

The author now proclaims a benediction upon the reader which comprises verses 20 and 21. His opening words in this proclaim a title not found in the Old Testament, and which is only found in Paul’s writings elsewhere as he calls upon “the God of peace.” In Paul’s writings, as in Hebrews, there is normally something in the epistle which was elaborated on which would impede peace in one’s life,

but which was addressed by the author to bring about a state of peace in those who applied the principle(s) to their lives.

In the Greek, there is an article before “peace,” which is lacking in almost all translations. It more rightly says, “the God of the peace.” It is an indication of the great and expected peace which the redeemed will see realized in its fullest sense when they are brought to glory, but which we have a foretaste of now as we consider our salvation and what it means in a world full of toil and strife. Jesus spoke of this peace in John 14:27. Paul again refers to it in Philippians 4:7.

As such, there is now an appeal to the “God of peace” for the blessing which is to be stated. But before making the appeal, a couple more descriptors of this same God of peace will be mentioned. First, it is He who “brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead.”

Here is the only specific reference to the resurrection of Christ in the book of Hebrews. A note on the general resurrection was found in Chapter 6, but this is specifically Christ’s victory over death which is being referred to. It is through His death, and only through His life because of that victory over death, that man’s access to God and a restored paradise is possible.

It is a note which explains to us the words of Jesus in John 14:6. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No person may come to the Father except through Him. It is He who holds the keys to Hades and death (Revelation 1:8), and it is He alone who allows our release from the clutches of both.

Next, the author calls Him, “that great Shepherd of the sheep.” The Greek reads, “the shepherd of the sheep, the great.” In John 10:14, Jesus claims the title, the Good Shepherd. In 1 Peter 2:25, Christ is called “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls,” and in 1 Peter 5:4, He is called “the Chief Shepherd.” Each of these expresses the exalted nature of the Shepherd who has the ultimate care for those of His flock. But the truly remarkable aspect of His care of the flock is highlighted by the next words, “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

Christ was willing to lay down His life for His flock, exactly as He promised in John 10:15 (and elsewhere), in order to bring about the salvation of those who come to Him in faith. And in this, it was a one-time-for-all-time act. His sacrifice provided “the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

The word “everlasting,” signifies “eternal.” Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant and, as was seen several times in Hebrews, annulled it. Unlike that covenant, the New Covenant has no end. Its significance for those who come to Christ is eternal in nature. It is this part of Christ’s work, meaning His death, that initiated this covenant. The resurrection simply proved the effectual nature of it. In His resurrection, proof of sinlessness was seen. Therefore, the resurrection is a seal upon which we can know – with all certainty – that the blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse us from all impurity.

In all, a more literal rendering of the entire verse would be –

“Now the God of the peace, having brought up out of the dead the shepherd of the sheep, the great, by an eternal covenant: the Lord – of us – Jesus.”

Life application: Two excellent points to ponder from this verse –

1. In the 23rd Psalm, David calls the Lord, “my shepherd.” That title is applied to Jesus in various forms – by Himself and by the writers of the epistles. What is clearly implied is that Jesus is the incarnation of Jehovah of the Old Testament. There is no doubt the writers of the New Testament intended for us to see this.
2. Jesus’ shed blood initiated a new and eternal covenant. It completely sets aside the Old Covenant for those who have trusted in Him.

Are you struggling with legalism and working under the law to please God instead of trusting in Christ alone for your salvation? Are you struggling with the concept of Jesus' divinity? Both of these are clearly referred to and spoken of here and elsewhere. Take time to reflect on the surety of God's ability to save you despite your failings. Also, take time to reflect on the unique nature of the God/Man – Jesus our Lord. And then accept these as absolute truth. It is what Scripture teaches.

Lord God Almighty! Thank You for Jesus, our Great Shepherd. He is the One who reaches down into humanity to redeem us from the curse of the law. Help us to understand that You have accomplished this through Him, and that our only means of reconciliation to You is through what He has accomplished. Glory, majesty, and perfection reside in You alone, O God! Amen.

...make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:21

This is the completion of the benediction which the author began in the previous verse. They read together –

“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The words of this verse state the actual appeal to the “God of peace” mentioned in the previous words. The appeal is to “make you complete in every good work.” The word translated as “make complete” carries the idea of bringing something (or someone) to its proper condition. It is to bring to a state of fully functioning or

full maturity. The obvious meaning, then, is that the readers (including us) are on a path which will hopefully take us from one level to the next, always maturing in order “to do His will.”

The implication is that we cannot do His will perfectly if we are not maturing in Christ. The average Christian is implored to not be average, but to excel in all ways, becoming perfect in knowledge, conduct, and adherence to the precepts of Scripture as they apply to us. The author is not saying that we are, or will become apart from glorification, perfect, but that God will continue to bring us to this state. But this can only happen if we are willing to strive for it. In this, He will be “working in you what is well pleasing in His sight.”

God will work through those who are willing to be worked through. It is a petition for God to do in us what He wills in order to bring us to a fully mature state. Again, however, it will not come about by a mere appeal. It will only come about if that appeal is mixed with both the desire to mature and the pursuit of maturing. This is not an appeal by the author to override the conduct of a person, but for God to work in those who are pursuing Him. And this includes the thought that God will work “through Jesus Christ.”

When God works in us, it is only because of the Person of Christ and the gospel which He brought forth in the New Covenant. God will not work in any person not “in Christ.” It would be illogical to think He would do so. The very purpose of Christ coming is to be the Mediator between God and man (see Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24 & 1 Timothy 2:5).

It is He – meaning Jesus Christ – of whom the author says, “to whom *be* glory forever and ever.” The context of the passage indicates that it is Jesus who is being referred to. In such a statement is found the equation of praising God through the Son and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This is so based on an understanding of the Godhead as revealed in Scripture.

And thus the benediction closes in the same manner as the epistle began, meaning with a focus on the glory of Jesus Christ. This was made perfectly evident in Hebrews 1:1-4. Jesus Christ is the focal point for our worship of the Godhead, and it is to and through Him that we give our praise and glory. In this, God is perfectly pleased and fully satisfied.

The author then closes his benediction with the word, “Amen.” The word signifies, “So be it.”

Life application: As God is otherwise unknowable to us except as He specifically reveals Himself in nature, He sent His word through the prophets and then through His Son in fulfillment of that word to allow us to know Him more fully. By saying about Jesus, “to whom *be* glory for ever and ever,” we are to understand that Jesus receives the glory which was reserved for God alone in the Old Testament. In other words, God has revealed Himself in Jesus because Jesus Himself is God incarnate. God is not diminished in our praise of Jesus Christ. Rather, He is glorified through it.

Lord, thank You for equipping us for every good work according to Your greatness. May our actions may be pleasing to You. Help us to use our time rightly in doing the works that glorify You. In all things, may we give you the honor You are due. We pray this in the powerful and personal name of Jesus. Amen.

And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. Hebrews 13:22

The author now makes a final appeal as a part of his closing comments by calling his audience “brethren.” He is writing to believers, and – as is the case in the Greek – the masculine stands for both males and females. There is no reason to change modern Bibles to read “brothers and sisters” as is becoming so common.

Females are included in such an address and the only reason for such a change is political correctness.

He then gives his appeal which is for them to “bear with the word of exhortation.” The idea here is that his tone has been direct, purposeful, and at times rather complicated in what was relayed. He is asking them to understand the necessity for these things. Further, it is certainly an appeal to not only understand this, but to consider what has been presented, apply it to their lives, and walk in accord with the principles he has laid out. The author is calling for the words he has written to become a part of the life and doctrine of all who read it (or hear it read).

With that understood, and almost as a slight apology, he says, “for I have written to you in few words.” This would further explain the words, “bear with the word of exhortation.” What he is saying is that if he had written more words, with a deeper explanation of the direct, purposeful, and at times rather complicated letter, they might have an easier time understanding the complexities of what has been presented.

However, the letter is inspired by God, and it is exactly what He intended for the reader to have. What this means is that God is asking us to not only read the letter, but to search out Scripture where the letter is hard for us to understand, and to then think on the reason for what has been presented.

In other words, we are being asked to study the whole counsel of God in order to show ourselves approved. Hebrews is not a stand-alone letter. It is an explanation of many issues and doctrines which are found in Scripture, but which can only be fully understood by understanding the rest of Scripture as well.

Life application: Considering the cost in both time and materials in writing an ancient epistle such as Hebrews, this verse may be a bit more easily understood. The author wrote a short letter on the Person and work of Jesus. There are several such verses in the New Testament and they remind us of the infinite riches of

Jesus that we weren't privy to. How blessed we will be when we have a complete understanding of all that wasn't included. Such a note leaves us wanting more!

However, God left nothing out of His word that we need and included nothing in His word that is superfluous. In other words, God's word is exactly what we need to live our lives in a manner pleasing to Him and to have sufficient knowledge of Him for our edification. Considering the incredible complexity of the structure of Hebrews, and also its orderly detailing of the superiority of Jesus over the law, over angels, over the high priest of Israel, and so on, we have a beautiful display of God's wisdom.

The selection of the book's author, who has such a masterful skill of presenting these concepts, brings glory to Jesus. It perfectly presents Him as all-sufficient in those areas that were once lacking. Truly He is "greater than" in every way. When you read your Bible, take careful time to cross-reference key points between other books and to think on how they unite into one perfect whole. By doing so, you can have a much fuller understanding of the points which may not be explicitly stated anywhere in the Bible. Such is the study of God's word. It is a lifetime adventure into His will and intent for you, His precious child. Just as you cherish a love letter from someone, never fail to cherish the greatest Love Letter of all time – the Holy Bible.

Thank you for Your precious word, O God. Help us to understand it, love it, and share it with others. When a passage is difficult, please open our minds and eyes to understand it properly that we may be fully equipped to be pleasing in our walk with you. This is our prayer today, and it is made in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. Hebrews 13:23

Here, Timothy is introduced into the epistle. He is the same person to whom Paul addresses the epistles 1 and 2 Timothy, and who is referenced in quite a few of his other epistles. Paul normally refers to Timothy with the proper name first in the Greek, and with a definite article, such as, "Timothy the brother." However, here it says, "the brother of us, Timothy," meaning, "our brother Timothy." This cannot be used as a case against Pauline authorship, because in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 it says, "Timothy the brother of us" meaning, "our brother."

The placement of the name first or last, and the use of "our brother" as opposed to "the brother" is based upon the words in relation to who is being addressed and the context in which Timothy is being referred to. As this epistle is to the Hebrew people, it is more natural to speak of Timothy as "our brother" first. The very fact that Timothy is being referred to, and as "our brother," actually strengthens the idea of Pauline authorship. Timothy was Paul's protege and they were almost constant companions. The words here reflect such a notion.

From there, it says that Timothy "has been set free." This is, at times, translated as "set free from prison," or implying that this is the case. The word used can reflect that, but it could be something as simple as being dismissed in some other way. This is the only time the word is used in the epistles. It is found throughout the gospels and Acts, and it simply means to release, let go, dismiss, etc. It is used, for example, when Jesus dismissed the crowds who came to hear Him speak.

Therefore, the words can be rendered as simply as, "our brother Timothy *who* has been sent away, with whom if he returns soon, I will see you." In other words, Paul may have sent him on a mission (which he is seen to have done at times – see Acts 19:22, for example) and if he returned in time, they would travel together to be with this group of Hebrew people.

The main point is that Timothy is included in the epistle and that the author had hoped that he and Timothy would together come to fellowship with this group.

Life application: Tradition (not in the Bible) records that Timothy served as the Bishop of Ephesus in about AD 65. He held that position for about 15 years, but eventually he tried to halt a pagan procession of idols, ceremonies, and songs that was occurring there. In response to his gospel preaching, they beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death. Sticking up for the gospel wasn't easy then and it has been a difficult ride for many faithful since then as well.

Countless faithful people have been martyred throughout the ages and it still occurs today. Despite this, Jesus' promise of eternal life is given by our God, who cannot lie, and it is worth all the temporary troubles we may face for His name's sake. Let us determine to stand fast on the gospel, no matter what. The rewards will be heavenly.

Finally, are you waiting for a reunion with someone today? As the old saying goes, "Distance makes the heart grow fonder." When the time of our final reunion comes, it will be a wonderful occasion, especially if it is Jesus you are waiting on!

Lord, we look with anticipation for that Day when you will return and take us to be with You. Never has there been, nor will there ever be, a greater reunion than when we see Your face. May it be soon! Amen.

Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.
Hebrews 13:24

The author has had the leadership in mind throughout this final chapter. In 13:7, he said –

“Remember those who rule over you...”

In verse 13:17, he then said –

“Obey those who rule over you...”

Now, just before his final words, he again calls the leadership to mind by saying, “Greet all those who rule over you.” The word “you” is plural, and so the words are to those of the church as a whole. In this, he is asking that the body greet the leaders. As the leaders would be a part of the church, it seems superfluous to say this, but it could be that there was a leadership which was not at the particular body where the letter was received, or it could be that the letter is actually intended to be read by a group of churches which were spread out. In this, the author would be sending his greetings to the heads of each individual church, and also to “all the saints.” This would be in line with Peter’s greetings to his audience, probably the same group of people, who were originally addressed in this epistle –

“To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” 1 Peter 1:1

This addition then strengthens the thought of a group of churches receiving the letter. Again, if the author was writing to the church, and all ears were listening as it was read, the comment would appear to be superfluous. However, it was understood that there would be leaders not present at some times, and various saints not present at others. If it was understood that the letter was to be read at various times and places, the greeting makes more sense. But regardless of this, he is being thorough in extending greetings to all.

Finally, he says, “Those from Italy greet you.” Although the author is probably writing from Italy, it also may be that he is not, and that he is simply extending a greeting from a group of Italians that was with him. It can be read either as

meaning “those who are in Italy send greetings from there,” or it could mean “those who are from Italy send their greetings.” Either way, it is the believers of Italy who are specifically named.

This unusual addition is noted by Cambridge with the words, “...it suggests a not unnatural inference that it was written to some Italian community from some other town *out of* Italy. Had he been writing from Italy he would perhaps have been more likely to write ‘those *in* Italy’ (comp. 1 Peter 5:13).”

If this is correct, and it appears to be the intent, and if it is Paul who wrote the epistle, then it would form a rather remarkable pattern. Acts had closed out with Paul in Rome (Italy), showing a transfer from Jew to Gentile, Rome being emblematic of the Gentile rule at that time. Further, his first letter was to the Romans. If this is Paul’s epistle, its placement at the end of his writings would have his letters both beginning and ending with the Italian saints as addressees.

Life application: The letter to the Hebrews was either sent with a cover letter which didn’t survive, or it was hand-carried by someone who could verify its authorship and authority. Either way, the letter itself survived intact, was recognized as authoritative, and was eventually included in the 66 books of the Bible.

Without it, we would have a lack in our understanding of the supremacy of Jesus over the Old Covenant shadows and pictures which pointed to His greater work. It is a letter included in Scripture for both the leadership and the saints in general, and all should be taught its truths. The wisdom revealed in it is the wisdom of God found in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Be sure to think of what is taught in Hebrews as you read the Old Testament and the gospels in the future. By combining your knowledge of what is revealed here to those studies, the things spoken of in those books makes so much more sense.

Lord, help us to take in the whole counsel of God, remembering what we have learned in various books, and to then see how what we learned in one area actually applies to studies in another area. Your word is a beautiful whole where the parts all work together harmoniously. Help us to understand this, and to learn what You are revealing as we see redemptive history unfold in its beautiful pages. To Your honor and glory! Amen.

Grace be with you all. Amen. Hebrews 13:25

The final words of the book of Hebrews are reflective of the words of Paul. The same words are found at the close of Titus. They are also found without the word “all” in Colossians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy.

The author desires that grace be realized in and among his audience. Grace is unmerited favor. It is getting what you do not deserve.

With these words, we close out the book of Hebrews. This has been a marvelously fantastic 303 days of study, and one which has merely touched on the depths of this wonderful book. In this final salutation, the author wishes grace to his audience. Despite being written to the Hebrew believers of his time, this includes you today.

As a closing thought, Albert Barnes says of this epistle –

“It is the true key with which to unlock the Old Testament; and with these views, we may remark in conclusion, that he who would understand the Bible thoroughly should make himself familiar with this Epistle; that the canon of Scripture would be incomplete without it; and that, to one who wishes to understand the Revelation which God has given, there is no portion of the volume whose loss would be a more irreparable calamity than that of the Epistle to the Hebrews.”

Life application: Surprisingly, if you want to see a lot of anger between Christians, do a study on the word “grace.” For such an uplifting and generous word, it divides to the point of great animosity. The reason for this is because by interpreting the word, or more precisely the concept of, grace one way or another we will have a different view on what God has done for us in human history – particularly in the Person of Jesus.

Romans Catholicism says that we must “participate” in grace. To them, what Jesus did – including going to the cross – is in itself insufficient for our salvation. Those who follow the doctrines of John Calvin see grace as bestowed on believers unconditionally – think of it as being “forced” on those God chooses to save. The Bible teaches neither of these.

There is a happy middle though. Grace is unmerited favor – it is getting what you do not deserve. If someone offers you a gift, that is not something you can earn. If you go to pay for the gift, then at some point you are going to offend the giver and negate the fact that it was a gift. Such is the case with our salvation. It is a gift. There is no merit deserving of it and no participation in keeping it, but it must be received in order to be possessed. The Bible makes this clear again and again.

A gift which is forced on someone is oppressive – no matter what the gift is. It needs to be offered and received, not forced, in order for it to be a true gift. Just as Adam used free-will to reject God’s fellowship, we must choose to receive it back now that Christ Jesus has made it possible. God’s grace in Jesus Christ is unmerited favor, offered to all. It is all-sufficient in and of itself to save. Accept God’s gift and be reconciled through the precious Gift – our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with you all.

O God, thank You for the book of Hebrews. And thank you for Your grace, explained in this book as it tells us of the Work of Jesus Christ our Lord, Savior, Mediator, and Friend. May we have humble hearts toward You, never finding fault in the sufficiency of His work, but rather resting in the all-sufficiency of it. Thank You for Your grace! Amen.