

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

By: William B. Hallman

INTRODUCTION

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

The title given to this book is TO THE HEBREWS (pros 'Ebraious). Where the title originated we cannot say. We do know that it was the common designation in both the Western and Eastern Churches by the second century. The original destination of this Epistle has never been known, whether it was to a local group of Jewish believers, or to all the scattered tribes.

II. DESTINATION OF THE EPISTLE

As said above, the exact destination is not known. In The Christian for April 27 and May 4, 1916, there appeared two articles by J.W. Thirtle, LLD, wherein the writer sought to show that the epistle to the Hebrews "in very early times followed that of Galatians". Quoting from this article: "What, in reality, do we find? Just this - - two epistles or writings, in close succession, in a professedly Pauline section of the New Testament, are merely separated or divided off, the one from the other, by the words pros Hebraious, 'to Hebrews'". The writer proceeds to give evidence to prove that the epistle to the Galatians is the "covering epistle" and the epistle to the Hebrews is an "enclosure" written especially for the Hebrew believer in the churches of Galatia. Parallels between the two epistles are suggested; the quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 in Galatians 3:2 and Hebrews 10:38; the covenant teaching of Galatians 3:15-17; 4:24; Hebrews 8:6-11; 9:15-20; 10:16. Both epistles deal with mediatorship (Gal. 3:19-20; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). Galatians 4:26 speaks of the Jerusalem that is above, Hebrews 12:22 of the heavenly Jerusalem.

III. AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE

From earliest times, Hebrews has been ascribed, and also denied, to the Apostle Paul. Many other names have been suggested such as Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Philip, Priscilla, Clement of Rome, Aquila, Silas, and Titus.

Franz Delitzsch thinks that it is Paul's thought in Luke's language. There are important words and phrases here which are only found elsewhere in St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts, and for this and other reasons Delitzsch holds that this epistle is the third work of Luke.

Godet says: "This Epistle, without introduction or subscription, is like the great High Priest of whom it treats, who was without beginning of days or end of years, abiding an High Priest continually. It is entirely fitting that this book should remain anonymous".

Harnack made a sensation a few years ago by declaring his belief that the Epistle was written by a woman, Priscilla. He says she was an intellectual woman and of great influence in the early church; she was a friend of Paul and Timothy, and Paul addresses her as a "co-worker"; She belonged to the second or outer circle of believers, not of the personal disciples of the Lord.

Barnabas as an author:

1. He was a Jew and in perfect sympathy and in the best of standing with his race.
2. He was a Levite, and because of this especially interested in temple duties and ritual.

The argument of the main portion of this Epistle has to do with the Jewish worship. The only

occurrence of the word “Levitical” in the N.T. is in Heb. 7:11, and the word Levi as an individual in 7:5,9.

3. Barnabas would be familiar with the Psalms. Nearly half the quotations from the O.T. in Hebrews are from the Psalms.

4. Barnabas was a Hellenist Jew and a native of Cyprus, therefore he could write good Greek.

5. He was a companion of Paul, and knew also Timothy, since he was with Paul on his Galatians missionary journey.

6. Barnabas was an apostle (Acts 14:14).

7. Barnabas was a son of consolation and of exhortation (Acts 4:36).

8. There is the positive testimony of Tertullian, who said, “There exists also a writing entitled to the Hebrews, by Barnabas”. Novatian, in the third century, quotes Heb. 13:15 as from the writings of the holy Barnabas. Only the mention of Paul and Luke as the translator of Paul, have we testimony with Barnabas from the church Fathers.

Paul as the Author:

1. Against Pauline Authorship:

a. Internal evidences – Style and language, categories, thought and method of argument all differ widely from those of any writings ascribed to Paul.

b. Paul quotes from both the Hebrew and Septuagint (LXX) Greek O.T. Hebrews quotes only from the LXX.

c. Paul’s formula of quotation is different – “It is written” or “The Scripture saith”, as against “God” or “The Holy Spirit” or “One somewhere saith”.

d. Paul could not have written 2:3 for he says that he did not get his gospel from them that heard Christ (Gal. 1:12; 2:6).

For a Pauline Authorship:

a. In 2 Peter 3:15 we have a statement to the fact that Paul had written a letter to the Hebrews.

b. Hebrews 13:23 makes reference to the fact that Timothy had been set at liberty. Many think that only Paul could speak of Timothy on this wise.

c. The logical presentation of the Epistle is Pauline.

d. In Heb. 10:30 the author quotes from Deut. 32:35, but does not give a literal translation of the Hebrew, nor a literal quotation of the LXX. In Rom. 12:19 Paul quotes same passage in same manner.

e. Words peculiar to Paul: agon “race”, “fight”, “conflict” a word borrowed from the Grecian games. This word occurs in Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; and in Hebr. 12:1. The context of Hebrews 12:1 uses such words as “run”, “Patience”, “witness”, “faith”, “perfect”, that are characteristic of the context of the Apostle’s usage elsewhere.

f. “All things under His feet”. These words from Psalm 8 occur in 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:22 and Heb. 2:8.

g. “The just shall live by faith” – These words taken from Habakkuk are found in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews and nowhere else in the N.T.

h. “Grace be with you all. Amen”- This forms the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews and is Paul’s close in all His epistles.

Petrine Authorship of the Epistle: The strong Petrine element in the Epistle makes some believe that the author was of the Petrine following, rather than Paul or Pauline.

First Epistle of Peter

1:2 – “And sprinkling of the blood
Of Jesus Christ”.

1:4 – “To an inheritance incorruptible” etc.

1:6 – “If need be ye are in heaviness” etc.

Epistle to the Hebrews

12:24 – “And to the blood of sprinkling”

9:15 - “The promise of eternal inheritance”.

12:7,11 - “If ye endure chastening”, etc.

- 1:13 – “Be sober and hope to the end”.
 1:15 – “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation”.
 1:18,19 – “The precious blood of Christ”.
 1:21 – “That raised Him from the dead”.
 1:22 – “See that ye love one another”.
 3:8 – “Love as brethren”.
 2:11 – “Strangers and pilgrims”.
 2:5 – “A spiritual house”.
 2:13 – “Submit yourselves”.
 2:22 – “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”.
 2:23 – “When he suffered,” etc.
 3:18 – “For Christ also hath once suffered”.
 4:1 – “Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered”.
 4:13 – “Partakers of Christ’s sufferings”.
 2:24 – “Who his own self bare our sins”.
 3:6 – “Even as Sarah”.
 (See 3:20; 4:9; 5:10; 5:12)
- 10:35,36 – “Cast not away therefore” etc. also 12:1.
 12:10 – “Partakers of His holiness”.
 9:12 – “By His own blood”. See also 12:24; 13:12.
 13:20 – “Brought again from the dead”.
 13:1 – “Let brotherly love continue”.
 11:13 – “Strangers and pilgrims”.
 3:6 – “Whose house are we”.
 13:17 – “Submit yourselves”.
 4:15 – “Yet without sin”.
 7:26 – “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”.
 5:8 – “The things which he suffered”.
 2:10 – “Perfect through suffering”.
 2:18 – “In that he himself hath suffered”.
 9:28 – “To bear the sins of many”.
 11:11 – “Through faith also Sarah”, etc.
 (See 11:7; 13:2; 13:20, 21, 22)

IV. DATE OF THE WRITING

1. It was written after Timothy’s imprisonment. Hebr. 13:23

We cannot say when this was. But it must have been at the same time or after Paul’s first imprisonment. A.D. 64.

2. The Epistle was written before the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

The author says that Jesus, if he were upon the earth, would not be a priest, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law (8:4). The sacrifices must have still been going on. (8:13).

3. Must have been written just on the eve of the destruction of Jerusalem (10:25)
4. Somewhere between the dates of 64 – 70 A.D.

V. PURPOSE OF THE WRITING

1. The superiority and finality of Christianity.
2. To show forth the excellencies of Christ, and the subsequent responsibilities.

3. Not the salvation of the sinner, but the sanctification or perfection of the saint. We are not told in this book how lost sinners can be saved: but how saved sinners on their way to rest (Canaan) can be made “perfect” in every good work to do His will.

4. It does not set forth Israel’s redemption from Egypt, but her failure to enter The Promised Land.

5. It sets forth Abraham, not of Genesis Ch. 15, but of Genesis Ch. 22 (Heb. Ch. 6).

6. This is not a message of the Mystery, the Church which is His Body (Ephesians); but the message of Phil. Ch. 3 – “not already perfected” and having “not already obtained” – dealing with the hope and the prize.

7. A Key to the Epistle – “Perfection”.

a. The Law made nothing perfect (7:19)

b. Perfection Possible under New Covenant

Because it had better sacrifices and a better hope (5:14; 6:1; 11:40; 12:23).

c. The Perfection (10:14; 12:1-2).

8. Another Key to the Epistle – Better (kreisson, stronger, more powerful)

Heb. 1:4; 6:9; 7:7,19,22; 8:6 (twice); 9:23; 10:34; 11:16; 11:35; 11:40; 12:24

Used thirteen times in the Epistle. Better than angels, a better name, better things that accompany salvation, better priesthood, hope, and covenant, promises, ministry. Better sacrifice, the blood of sprinkling.

9. “The argument of the letter is that the first Covenant was indeed divine but was only a shadow of the promised Second Covenant; and that being so, if the shadow was divine how much more must the substance be” Williams.

10. Christ is the Substance of which all else is but a dim shadow. In Him the worshipper finds his Priest, his Altar, his Sacrifice, his Baptism, his Pascal Supper, his Circumcision, and his Place of Worship.

11. The writer used both contrast and comparison, mostly the former. It is addressed to the many thousands of Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but who were all zealous in keeping the Law, and in not forsaking circumcision or the customs (Acts 21:20). The interpretation belongs to them; the application to all believers. They were now being persecuted, and were on the verge of drifting or backsliding into the old economy completely.

12. The Epistle covers the period from the Day of Pentecost to the Destruction of Jerusalem. That city is the center of the Acts, and is the Camp of Hebrews – 13:13.

VI. OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE

A. THE PROLOGUE 1:1-3.

1. PAST REVELATION 1:1 (Fragmentary – Partial)

a. Polumeros – “In many Parts”.

b. Polutropes – “Thru many Processes”.

c. Palai – “In Time Past”.

- d. Patrasin – “Unto the Patriarchs”.
- e. Prophetais – “by the Prophets”.

2. PRESENT REVELATION 1:2-3 (Final – Perfect)

The Superiority of the Son.

- a. “Heir of all things”.
- b. “Creator of the Ages”.
- c. “Effulgence of God’s glory”.
- d. “Impress of His Person”.
- e. “Upholder of all by His Power”.
- f. “Purifier of our sins”.
- g. “Conqueror at God’s right hand”

B. THE PERFECT REDEEMER 1:4 – 8:5
(CHRIST)

- 1. BETTER THAN ANGELS 1:4 – 2:18
(Neglect leads to Drifting – 2:1-4)
- 2. BETTER THAN MOSES 3:1-19
(Hardening of heart leads to Unbelief – 3:7-19)
- 3. BETTER THAN JOSHUA 4:1-13
- 4. BETTER THAN AARON 4:14 – 8:5
(Immaturity leads to Apostasy – 6:1-12)

C. THE PERFECT REDEMPTION (8:6 – 10:18)
(CALVARY)

- 1. BETTER COVENANT 8:6-13
- 2. BETTER SANCTUARY 9:1-11
- 3. BETTER SACRIFICE 9:11-28
- 4. BETTER SALVATION 10:1-18

D. THE PERFECT RESPONSE (10:19 – 13:21)
(CONFIDENCE)

- 1. BETTER LIFE OF FAITH 10:19 – 11:40
(Willful sinning leads to Blasphemy – 10:26-39)
 - a. Exhortations to Faith 10:19-25
 - b. Examples of Faith 11:1-40
- 2. BETTER LIFE OF HOPE 12:1-29
(Refusal leads to Lake of Fire – 12:25-29)

3. BETTER LIFE OF LOVE 13:1-21

E. THE EPILOGUE 13:22-25

- 1. EXHORTATION 22
- 2. EXPECTATION 23
- 3. SALUTATION 24
- 4. BENEDICTION 25

VII. EVALUATIONS OF THE EPISTLE

1. “The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most important and one of the most interesting books ever written. It is full of strange and startling statements and it has had a strange and extraordinary history. It is unique in conception, unparalleled in content, and preeminent in composition. It stands in our New Testament in a class by itself, like a noble but solitary figure in the midst of the throng. As a piece of literature the Epistle to the Hebrews takes first rank in the New Testament. It has a classic elegance of structure which is not approached in any other New Testament book. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the composition is elegant and classical throughout”. – D. A. Hayes

2. “The Epistle to the Hebrews is the only piece of writing in the New Testament which in structure of sentence and style shows the care and dexterity of an artistic writer”. - Blass

3. “The author of Hebrews . . . a teacher rhetorically trained, who, notwithstanding all the earnestness of his concern for the salvation of his readers, nevertheless makes it a point to put his thoughts into artistic and rhythmical language”. – Zahn

4. “Never were premises more clearly stated; never was an argument handled in a more masterly manner, and never was a conclusion more legitimately and satisfactorily brought forth. The matter is everywhere the most interesting, the manner is throughout the most engaging, and the language is most beautifully adapted to the whole, everywhere appropriate, always nervous and energetic, dignified as is the subject, pure and elegant as that of the most accomplished Grecian orators, and harmonious and diversified as the music of the spheres. So many are the beauties, so great the excellency, so instructive the matter, so pleasing the manner, and so exceedingly interesting the whole, that the work may be read a hundred times over without perceiving anything of sameness, and with new and increased information at each reading. This latter is an excellency which belongs to the whole revelation of God; but to no part of it in such a peculiar and super eminent manner as to the Epistle to the Hebrews”. – Adam Clarke

5. “The first systematic treatise of Christian theology”. – Reuss

6. “The strangest book in the New Testament. It is a Janus head with two faces, one Pauline and the other Jewish”. - Friedlander

7. “The thoughts of the epistle are wonderful, and not second to the acknowledged writings of Paul”. – Origen

8. “It certainly is a wondrously fine epistle, which speaks in a masterly and solid way of the priesthood of Christ, and finely and fully expounds the Old Testament”. – Luther

9. “One of the greatest and most difficult books of the New Testament”. - Edwards

10. “Obscure in origin, it is clear and deep in its knowledge of Christ. Hailing from the second generation of Christians, it is full of Pentecostal inspiration. Traceable to no apostle, it teaches, exhorts, and warns with apostolic authority and power”. – Schaff

11. “The Epistle to the Hebrews has not its like among the epistles of the New Testament, resembling in this uniqueness of position, as well as in tone and spirit, the great prophetic exhortation of Isa. 40-66, which in like manner stands alone among the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. The tone of thought in both these portions of Scripture has the same transcendental character; each has a threefold division of its contents; the same majestic march and flight of language characterizes each, the same Easter morning breath from another world, and the same tantalizing veil suspended before the eyes of the vexed inquirer, now half revealed, now concealing the origin and authorship of either composition. No other book of the New Testament is distinguished by such brilliant eloquence and euphonius rhythm as our epistle; and this rhetorical form is not superimposed on the subject, but is its true expression, as setting forth the special glories of the New Covenant and of a new and Christ-transfigured world. Old and New Testaments are set the one over against the other, the moonlight of the Old Testament paling once and again before the sunrise of the new, and the heavenly prospect thus illumined”. - Delitzsch

LESSON # 1 - BRING MANY SONS UNTO GLORY

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 2:10 (Gen. 11:27 – 13:18)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most important epistles in the N.T., both to the Hebrew Christians to whom it was written, as well as Gentile believers. It shows the complete distinction between the Old and New Covenants, which is its dispensational value. Its doctrinal facts concerning Christ are valid in all dispensations.

2. In our Bibles this book is headed by the words: “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews”. The name of “Paul the Apostle” is not in the original. However, we have tried to show that there is sufficient evidence to believe that Paul was the author.

3. This is not an Epistle to the unsaved. It is written to:
- “Holy brethren” (3:1; 13:22)
 - “Partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1)
 - “Suffer the word of exhortation” (13:22)

The Epistle does not begin with The Passover in Egypt; but with Sinai in the Wilderness. So all its types are wilderness types.

4. The word “Hebrews” comes from the word Eber or Heber, one of the descendants of Shem through Arphaxad (Gen. 10:22-25; 11:10-17). The word means “to cross over a river”. Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation was called by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees and come to the land which God would show him. He left, and came to Haran with his father and nephew Lot. It was not until he crossed over the river – The Euphrates, and after he left Lot that we read: “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (Gen. 13:14-15).

- “Abraham the Hebrew” (Gen. 14:13).
- “a young man, an Hebrew” (Joseph – Gen. 41:12).
- “I am an Hebrew” (Jonah – Jonah 1:9).
- “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Paul – Phil. 3:5).

So we see the reason for the statement: “Let us go on”. Here were pilgrims and strangers on the move to perfection. Two words are outstanding in this book: Perfection and Perdition. In this book, the Old Covenant with its legal system, its ritual, priesthood, and ordinances had become obsolete. They were like a bank check which has been cashed and cancelled. God gave all these to His people as a bank check, a check that can only be valid as one takes it to God’s bank, where it can be cashed for the death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glory of Jesus Christ. How utterly foolish then to be glorying in a check that has been cashed and cancelled! The argument of this Epistle is that the Old Covenant was indeed Divine, but was only a shadow, a type of the promised New Covenant; and that being so, if the shadow were Divine how much more then the substance. The author uses contrast rather than comparison. It is addressed to the many thousands of Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but who were zealous of the Law, and did not forsake circumcision nor the customs (Acts 21:20). The Epistle covers the period from Pentecost to the destruction of Jerusalem. That city is the center of Acts, and is the “Camp” of the Hebrews (13:13).

5. Structural Outline -

A-1. – The Word Spoken (Chs. 1-2)

Thou remainest
Thou art the same
How escape if neglect
Bring in again the first begotten

B-1. – On To Perfection (Chs. 3-6)

Let us come boldly
Example of unbelief
Perfect vr. Babes
No renewal unto repentance
Senses exercised
Crucify afresh the Son

C-1. – Perfection Performed (Chs. 7-10:18)

But this Man
No perfection in priesthood
No perfection in Law
No perfection in ordinances
No perfection in sacrifices
But this Man

B-2. – Back to Perdition (Chs. 10:19 – 12:25)

Let us draw near
Examples of faith
Sons vr. Firstborn
Found no place of repentance
Discipline exercised
Trod under foot the Son

A-2. – The Word speaketh (Chs. 12:25 – 13:25)

Things that remain
Jesus Christ the same
Not escape if refuse
Brought again from the dead

6. Comparison between 1 Cor. 2 & 3; Heb. 5 & 6; Eph. 2 & 4

	<u>1 Corinthians</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>	<u>Ephesians</u>
1. Babes	3:1	5:13	4:14
2. Milk	3:2	5:13	---
3. Meat	3:2	5:14	---
4. Perfect	2:6	5:14; 6:1	4:13
5. Foundation	3:11	6:1	2:20
6. Fire	3:13	6:8	---
7.	Six things erected 3:12	Sixfold element 6:1-2	Seven-fold Unity 4:3-6

7. There are three main lines of truth in this Epistle which show how many sons are brought to glory – By Exhortation, By Instruction, and By Admonition.

8. The purpose of this writer is to set the soul free from the legal system with its religious formalities, and lead to the New Covenant with its spiritual realities in Christ.

I. BY MEANS OF EXHORTATION

“And I beseech you brethren, suffer the word of exhortation” (13:22).

“But exhort one another daily” (3:13).

“But exhorting one another” (10:25).

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation” (12:5).

This Epistle may truly be regarded as a word of exhortation; i.e. an appeal to stand fast in the midst of trials, persecutions, and temptations to go back into Judaism. The word of exhortation is seen in the phrase which occurs many times, namely, “Let us”.

1. Let us go on to rest (4:1,11,14,16).

Here is the exhortation to enter into the perfection of true rest. Israel could have no true rest in The Wilderness; nor could she have it in Canaan without conquering all the enemies. So neither Moses nor Joshua led Israel into rest. Christ alone can bring true rest and with it that perfection that God requires.

2. Let us go on to maturity (6:1-2).

In order to do this one must lay aside the things which belong to the childhood stage – “repentance from dead works, faith toward God, doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment”. These are all good in themselves, but they belong to a former day, the works of the legal system. A continuation here will never lead to maturity. It is no longer Moses, but Christ; no longer Aaron but Melchisedec.

3. Let us go on to spirituality (10:22,23,24).

Faith, Hope, and Love. The word “faith” in verse 23 should read “hope” (elpidos). See 1 Cor. 13:13.

4. Let us run in the race (12:1,13,28).

The runner has a goal in mind, the consummation of faith, hope and love. It is Jesus Christ Who is the beginner and perfecter of our faith. Paul could say: “I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

5. Let us go on to praise (13:15)

“From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the Lord’s name is to be praised” (Psalm 113:3). “Praise for mercies extends them; praise for miseries ends them”.

II. BY MEANS OF INSTRUCTION

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (3:1).

1. His Incarnation (2:14)

He took on Him the nature of man in order to be tempted, and to take on Himself the sin of humanity. In this way He could die and destroy the Devil and his works.

2. His Propitiation (2:17)

He was “a merciful and faithful High Priest”, Who completely satisfied both God and man. Thus His was a once for all sacrifice.

3. His Representation (9:24)

He appears in the presence of God for His people. “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (7:25).

4. His Manifestation (9:28)

He will come again, as Aaron came out of the Holy of Holies, to bless and to save His People.

III. BY MEANS OF ADMONITION

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation”? (2:3)

1. Warning against drifting (2:1-4)

Drifting away from what God has spoken in His Son back into the legal religion.

2. Warning against departure (3:7 – 4:13)

This is done through “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (3:12). This results in hardening of the heart (4:7). This peril of unbelief is an ever-present one. It is the peril of missing God’s rest and best.

3. Warning against deterioration (5:11 – 6:20)

Dullness of hearing leads to spiritual deterioration (5:11). One goes back to babyhood instead of coming to full age.

4. Warning against despising (10:26-39)

This is the peril of turning from the New Covenant, and from the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. This is a willful sin (10:26).

5. Warning against Degeneracy (12:14-29)

Defilement that leads to moral degeneracy.

CONCLUSION

The writer calls upon his brethren to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (3:1). The new life is to be completely taken up with Him. “Looking unto Jesus the beginner and perfecter of faith” (12:2).

LESSON # 2 - THE PROLOGUE (God hath spoken)

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. In San Francisco there is a fabulous store that is known the world over simply as “Gumps”. It has a reputation for carrying one of the finest assortment of jade objects in the world. In one small room, which has no windows and is sealed by two doors, is a collection of the rarest jade items. There are exquisitely carved vases, urns and objects of art in all the seven colors and manifold shades of jade. The prices are mainly in the thousands of dollars. There is one pure white jade vase which bears no price tag. It is said to have adorned Peking’s Imperial Palace at one time. Of all the lovely and costly things at Gumps, it is the rarest. It is superlative. Such a pre-eminent Person is Jesus Christ, the One Whom this book displays in all His glory.

2. The Superiority of Jesus Christ

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| a. He is the Son | b. He is the Heir |
| c. He is the Creator | d. He is the Effulgence |
| e. He is the Impress | f. He is the Upholder |
| g. He is the Purifier | h. He is the Ruler |

His relationship to:

GOD	- Son, Effulgence, Impress.
CREATION	- Heir, Creator, Upholder.
MANKIND	- Purifier, Interceder, Ruler.

3. “GOD HATH SPOKEN”

This is the most sublime, sovereign, and satisfying statement. “In the beginning God” (Gen. 1:1). “God, who at sundry times” etc. (Heb. 1:1). “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken” (Isa. 1:2). While heaven hears and hearkens, the earth turns a deaf ear to the Word of God. We listen to the philosopher, to the scientist, to the economist, and to the statesman-politician for any word of confidence and assurance. But man seldom turns to the voice of God spoken in His Word by His Son. Knowledge of God through His Word is the basic need of man. Such knowledge slays:

a. Self-importance – In the presence of God and His revelation, we must say: “I am but dust and ashes”, ... “I was as a beast before Thee”, ... “I abhor myself” (Gen. 18:27; Ps. 73:22; Job 42:6).

b. Pride of Knowledge – “Who can utter the mighty acts of Jehovah (Ps. 106:2), seeing that “His ways are past tracing out” (Rom 11:33).

c. Self-Sufficiency – “Who is sufficient for these things? ... we are not sufficient of ourselves ... but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5-6). Blessed is he whose self-esteem has been annihilated by the knowledge of God. So this Epistle of Hebrews opens up as abruptly as does the Book of Genesis. We are introduced to God immediately, instantly.

“GOD HATH SPOKEN

BY

- Intermediators

Under Old Covenant

Prophets
Angels
Moses
Aaron

Under New Covenant

SON

TO

MAN

4. So this Epistle opens majestically with God as the speaker and actor.
There are two distinct Persons: God and Man.
There are two distinct periods: “Times past” and “these last days”.
There are two distinct principals: “To our fathers” and “spoken unto us”.
There are two distinct particulars: In the prophets God spoke in a fragmentary way – “sundry times and divers manners” and in His Son God spoke finally – “in Son”.

I. THE PAST REVELATION (Vr. 1) Fragmentary and Partial

This first verse has within it (in the original) five “P’s” in a pod – polumeros, polutropos, palai, patrasin, and prophetais. These Greek words all begin with the letter “P”. The alliteration in this verse seems to be intentional. They can be put into English as: Parts, process, past, patriarchs and prophets.

1. In Many Parts (polumeros) - “God, who at sundry times”. In the first stage of His past revelation, God spake, not all at once, giving a complete revelation of His Being and will; but in many separate revelations, each of which set forth only a portion of the truth. It was sort of piecemeal as one would teach a child to spell a word – letter by letter and syllable by syllable. So God gradually uncovered His mind by the addition of one thing after another as time went on. This opening word refutes the long standing refusal of the Gospel by the Jew on the ground of the unchanging character of the Law of Moses. The Apostle is about to sweep aside the covenant of Sinai speaking of it as faulty (8:7) because a better covenant is being instituted in its place. The Law, so prized by the Hebrews, he shows made nothing perfect (7:19). The sacred ordination of Israel’s priests is after all “the law of a carnal commandment (7:11). The tabernacle was but a figure, and the sacrifices but “shadows”. Neither did the blood of bulls and goats take away sin (Chs. 9,10).

a. Unto Adam – Gen. 3:15 is the Promised Seed of the Woman and also the promised crushing of the serpent’s head. Subservient to this there were particular revelations given to Seth, Enos, Enoch, Lamech, and others before the Flood.

b. Unto Noah – To him God gave a covenant and revelation concerning the earth and its inhabitants. Further revelations were given to Melchizedek and others before the call of Abraham.

c. Unto Abraham – Here God restricted the Seed to his family and nation. He later confirmed the revelation to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

d. Unto Moses – The giving of the Law with the tabernacle and its service, erecting the Judaical church in the wilderness. Then there followed three principle subservient revelations: to David and Solomon, which were particularly designed to perfect the revelation of the will of God concerning the Old Testament worship: to the prophets, after the division of the kingdom unto the Captivity; and to Ezra with the prophets that assisted in the reformation after the return from captivity. In the revelation of the coming of Christ, He is to be the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15); of the line of Abraham (Gen. 12:3); of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10); and of the family of David (Ps. 132:11); born of a virgin (Isa. Ch. 7); in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah Ch. 5); foretold by Daniel as to time of appearance (Dan. 9:26); the manner of His betrayal (Zech. 11:12); that He would intercede for the transgressors and occupy a rich man's grave (Isa. 53:9-10).

2. Through Many Processes (polutropos)

Not only did God speak in many parts, here a little and there a little, but His methods were varied. Prophets received the revelation by visions, by dreams, by an angel, by voices. It came by type, symbol, ceremony, parable, law, commandment, and every kind of figurative language. The revelation differed according to the faithfulness and unfaithfulness of the covenant people. The many processes can be summarized in three categories:

a. By Promises – The O.T. is literally filled with promises that God made to His people. There is the promised gift of the Son (Isa. 9:6; 7:14); The promised government of the Son (Isa. 9:6-7); the promised gift of the Spirit (Joel 2:28).

b. By Precepts – God gave His people laws to live by: moral, ethical, social, and religious. Their whole life was regulated by laws absolutely perfect and adequate.

c. By Patterns – They all revealed Christ. Christ as the Lamb, the Morning Star, the Serpent of Brass, the Sun of righteousness, the Door, Bread, Water, Light, Cornerstone, Rock, and Foundation.

3. “In time past” (palai)

This is contrasted with the “last days” of verse 2, indicating the conclusion of the period of revelation. This “time past” was in the time of the O. T. revelation. It indicates a revelation, not only given, but also completed in the past.

4. “Unto the Patriarchs” (patrasin)

In contrast to “the fathers” the writer puts “us”. This means the O.T. patriarchs who received the message of God prior to and during Old Covenant days. Holy men of old became custodians of the verities of the faith. God did not speak to every Israelite directly. There was no individual communication; He spoke to the fathers, the leaders.

5. “By the Prophets” (prophetais)

In contrast to the prophets the writer puts the Son. The definite article is here used with the prophets, showing they were the instruments that God used. This contrast with “Son” will be seen later. “In the prophets” does not mean in the collection of prophetic writings, but rather in the prophets themselves as the vessels of Divine inspiration. “The prophet is an interpreter, echoing from within the saying of God” – Philo. The prophets were a goodly company from many walks of life – Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Micah, and Zechariah. It was not the prophet who originated the message. It was God who spoke through him, first in his mind and then in his speech. These men spake as they were

motivated by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). It was “the God of glory” Who made Himself known to Abraham (Acts 7:2), and declared Himself to be El Shaddai, God all-sufficient (Gen. 17:1).

The O.T. was therefore fragmentary, piece-meal, incomplete and insufficient as a perfect revelation; never intended to be complete. Hence no system of doctrine or faith can be based upon the O.T. alone. Here is where many make a mistake. Some sects base their belief upon O.T. Scripture.

II. THE PERFECT REVELATION (Vrs. 2-3) - Final and Perfect

“At the end of these days He hath spoken unto us in a Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He hath made the ages; Who being an irradiated brightness of His glory, and an exact representation of His being, also bearing up all things by the utterance of His power, purification of sins having achieved, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in High Places” – Rotherham’s translation.

“Spoken in Son” – The superiority of the Son; the others were merely servants. The O.T. Scriptures wherein God spoke to the Fathers were given over a long period of time through the ministry of many prophets, and a variety of methods were used, such as Law, Prophecy, and Symbol.

“Many were the forms and fashions” – Moffat

“In many distinct messages and by various methods” – Weymouth

In time past God spoke in many parts and in many processes. It was a hint here and a hint there. At one time the revelation came by dream and vision, at another through some symbolic action, at another by verbal communication. The speech of one prophet may be florid and full; of another, plain, brief and abrupt.

However, as God now speaks “in Son” we have a revelation superior and complete over the old in two particulars – Completeness of matter and uniformity of manner. Perfection and fullness constitute this new revelation as over against all the revelations of the O.T. Either the O. T. revelation was imperfect in itself by being partial; or it made the recipient of it imperfect.

“In these last days”. Better “at the end of these days”. The writer here has reference to the closing days of the Jewish or Pentecostal dispensation.

“But last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying, they will reverence my son” (Matt. 21:37).

The sending and speaking “in Son” represents a climax. “Son” here is placed in antithesis with “the prophets”. “In Son” is a rather strange expression. Note that the definite article is missing. This means that God is not speaking through the Son as He spoke through the prophets. It means that at last God has become incarnate; no longer using the mouth of an Isaiah or a Jeremiah; but partaking of human flesh and blood, He spake “in Son”. Moses, the greatest of the prophets, was but a servant; Christ is the Son (Heb. 3:5-6).

- A - 1: In sundry times
- B - 1: Unto the fathers
- C - 1: By the prophets

- A - 2: In these last days
- B - 2: Unto us (the Hebrews)
- C - 2: By His Son (Son revelation)

This Epistle is addressed to Hebrew Christians on the verge of apostasy. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward”. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Heb. 10:35; 3:14 – see also 6:4-6).

Christianity had disappointed them; they had not found the rest they anticipated. Persecution was everywhere. So they went back to Judaism – the Old Covenant – that they had left. They saw the splendid temple services, a line of priests, a religion fertile in prophets and martyrs. But all was on the eve of dissolution. The Jewish Commonwealth and the Hebrew Church were doomed and about to pass away. Yea, the hour had already come. To return to Judaism was to go down to atheism and destruction. This writer is now to show that the dispensation of the Son is superior to the dispensation of Moses, the angelic ministration, the prophets and the Aaronic priesthood. In the “Son” there is the substance instead of the shadow; the permanent and perfect for the piecemeal and the partial.

Revelation is completed in Christ; Redemption is accomplished in Christ; and Righteousness is available through Christ. The expression en huio (“in Son”) not “by the Son” or even “by a Son” indicates the truth of the final and absolute revelation of God in a Person. God is not only speaking through the Son; but by the Son Himself; the Son is the Word of God. The Son Himself is the final and full expression of God speaking. If it is the Son Himself Who speaks, how important then are the words of this Son! The prophets prefaced their messages with: “Thus saith the Lord”; while this Son said: “I say unto you”. All the O.T. revelation converged on Him (John 14:9). It was the same God Who spoke through the prophets that spoke “In Son”. The revelations through the messengers of old were incomplete but never inaccurate, progressive but never final. The revelation that came “in Son” – the One Who fully declared God – is characterized by completeness, perfection, and finality.

Dr. Saphir has strikingly summarized the contrast between the prophets and Christ as follows: “First, they were many: one succeeded another: they lived in different periods. Second, they gave out God’s revelation in divers manners – similitudes, visions, symbols. Each prophet had his peculiar gift and character. Their stature and capacity varied. Third, they were sinful men (Isa. 6:5; Dan. 10:8). Fourth, they did not possess the Spirit constantly. The ‘word’ came to them, but they did not possess the Word! Fifth, they did not understand the heights and depths of their own message (1 Pet. 1:10). Sixth, still less did they comprehend the whole of God’s revelation in O.T. times. Seventh, like John the Baptist they had to testify, ‘I am not the Light I am only sent to bear witness of the Light’”.

1. As Seen in His Person

“Hath in these last days spoken unto us in Son”.

a. By God’s Resplendent Glory

“hos on apaugasma tes doxes” – “Who being effulgence of the glory”. The word “apaugasma” translated “brightness” (A.V.) and “effulgence” (R.V.) is found only here in the N.T. The word is a compound, derived from apo, away from, and augazo, to shine. The word “augazo” occurs only in 2 Cor. 4:4 – “By whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of God should shine (or dawn, or beam forth) upon them”. This light and glory is further seen to be “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6) The thought of this word is better translated “effulgence or outraying of his glory”, than “reflection” or “brightness”.

“The Son of God is, in this His essential majesty, the expression and the sole expression of the divine light” – Alford.

“God lets His glory issue from Himself, so that there arises thereby a light-being like Himself” – Weiss.

So Christ is the outraying of the glory of God, not merely a reflection such as the moon reflects the glory of the sun, not having that glory intrinsically. The Nicene Creed affirmed that Christ was “Light of Light, very God of Very God”.

Effulgence implies identity of nature. As the light which proceeds from the sun is of the same essence as the sun; so, says the Lord Jesus: “I proceeded forth and came from God”; “I and my Father are one” (John 8:42; 10:30; 16:28). As sunshine, the effulgence of the sun, has no existence apart from the sun, but is the manifestation of the sun, so Christ is God in manifestation to human sense and experience.

On this subject of “effulgence” no one has better developed it than Dr. Gouge in his excellent commentary of 1650 A.D. He says: “No resemblance taken from any other creature can more fully set out the mutual relation between the Father and the Son: 1. The brightness issuing from the sun is the same nature that the sun is (John 16:30). 2. It is of as long continuance as the sun: never was the sun without the brightness of it (John 1:1). 3. The brightness cannot be separated from the sun; the sun may as well be made no sun, as have the brightness thereof severed from it (Prov. 8:30). 4. This brightness though from the sun is not the sun itself (John 8:42). 5. The sun and the brightness are distinct from each other; the one is not the other (John 5:17). 6. All the glory of the sun is this brightness (John 17:5; 2 Cor. 4:6). 7. The light which the sun giveth the world is by this brightness (John 14:9). Thus the Son is no whit inferior to the Father, but every way His equal. He was brightness, the brightness of His Father, yea, also the brightness of His Father’s glory. Whatever excellency was in the Father, the same likewise was in the Son”.

The word translated “glory” is doxa. So if Christ is the outraying of the glory of God, then glory stands for all the Divine attributes collectively. It is the unfolded fullness of the Divine perfections. Glory is then the Omnipotence, the Omniscience, the Omnipresence, the Immutability, the Eternity, the Love, the Grace, the Wisdom, the Holiness, and the Righteousness of God.

Doxa corresponds to the O.T. kabod, a term applied to the glory-cloud (the pillar of cloud and fire) which accompanied the Israelites during the Exodus, and also rested over the mercy-seat in the Tabernacle. The ark was the divinely-appointed symbol of the presence of God with His people, and was called “The glory” (1 Sam. 4:21,22). When the ark of God was captured by the Philistines, and the two sons of Eli were slain, then the wife of Phinehas, with her dying breath named her son Ichabod, saying: “the glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken”. (See also Ps. 78:61; 8:1; Exod. 24:15-17; 33:18-23; 40:33-34; 2 Chron. 5:14; Isa. 6:3; 2 Cor. 4:6; John 1:14; Eph. 1:17).

b. By God’s Representative Person (3a)

“Karakter tes hupostaseos autou” – The very image of His substance. So this One is the very impress of God’s substance. The idea of hypostasis is that of something which stands underneath: foundation, ground of hope, confidence, and so assurance itself. It is the substantial nature of anything. In other N.T. passages (2 Cor. 9:4; 11:17; Heb. 3:14; 11:1) it signifies in every instance ground or confidence. No law or set of laws, no fasts, no feasts, or sacrifices, no series of typical men or things could ever be the express image; Christ alone is that. Christ alone is the character of God’s substance.

The idea here is precision and perfection. As a seal on wax gives forth the exact image, so this Son is the exact image or character of God. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). “Effulgence” implies identity of nature: “Image” implies independent personality. From the first we learn that He was a Divine Person. Christ is the visible image of the Invisible God (Col. 1:15).

“These two images complete each other” says Dr. Meyer. “You might argue from the first that as the ray is only part of the sun, so Christ is only part of God; but this mistake is corrected by the second, for an impression must be co-extensive with the seal. You might argue from the second, that as the impression might be made on a very inferior material, so Christ’s nature was a very unworthy vehicle of the divine glory; but this mistake is corrected by the first,

for a beam is of the same texture as the sun. Co-extensive with God, of the same nature as God – thus is Jesus Christ”.

So Christ is the Impress of the substance of God, the One in whom all the Divine perfections are found. Though essentially Light, He is also the Outshining of the “Light”; though in Himself essentially God, He is also the visible Representation of God.

John chapter one is somewhat parallel to Hebrews chapter one. In John the title of Christ is “The Word” (Logos). It is the function of the Word to express the hidden thought. Creation is associated with this title (1:1-3). In verse 14 we are told: “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”. Then in verse 18: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him”.

2. AS SEEN IN HIS PRIORITY

“Whom He hath appointed heir of all things”. The word translated “heir” is kleronomos and means “to take into possession”. Three times in Hebrews we read of heirs – 1:2; 6:17 and 11:7. The word “kleronomeo” is found four times in Hebrews, and translated by “inheritance”, “heirs”, “inherit” and “inherited”. The word “kleronomia” is found twice in Hebrews and translated “inheritance”.

Heirship goes with sonship – see Rom. 8:17 and Gal. 4:7. So it is in order that heirship should follow the revelation of the Son here in verse two. There are three things intended by the word “heir” – Title, Dominion, and Lordship. Because He has a title to, He also has possession of and control of his heirship. God had from the beginning predestined His Son to be the possessor and sovereign of all things.

The pattern of Christ’s heirship is seen in the custom of bestowing the birthright upon the first born, as disclosed in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The firstborn had to be worthy of this honor or else he didn’t receive it, such as in the case of Esau the elder who was rejected because he forfeited his birthright.

Who can know the possessions which this Heir has at His disposal? He alone holds the title deeds to the earth (Rev. 5:5). His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and embraces Heaven, Earth, and under the earth. (See Rev. 4:11; 5:12; 19:16). There can be no catastrophe where there is the Heir, and no chaos and no crisis.

Christ as “Heir”, is of particular and peculiar interest to Israel. At the beginning of their race an “Heir” was promised to and through Abraham (Gen. 15:4). This would ultimately lead to God’s greater Heir, Christ (Matt. 1:1-16). Israel evidently identified Christ as the Heir, but in envy and unbelief rejected Him. In one of His parables, Jesus summarized the past history of Israel, brought it up to date, and prophetically includes His own death at their hands (Matt. 21:33-46 – see also Isa. 5:1-7; Psa. 80:8-19).

So at the beginning of the Book of Hebrews we see Christ as both the “SON” and “HEIR”. He has been rejected by national Israel as the “Son” of Abraham, and “Heir” to all the Covenants and promises made to this people. He still holds for Israel all the promised possessions and the day will come when He will restore the people and their inheritance. So this heirship stands for His peculiar Designation and reveals both His Dignity and Dominion.

3. AS SEEN IN HIS PERFORMANCE

“by whom also He made the ages; ... and upholding all things by the word of His power”.

a. By the Creative Purpose – “made the ages”.

The words “the ages” is in Greek tous aionas and should so be translated. It has reference to time periods, and not merely to a physical creation. It is not the word “kosmos” which means the material world, and the order of this physical world. At any rate there is only one world; the word here is plural.

In Hebrews 11:3 we read: “Through faith we understand that the ages were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear”. The word “framed” could better be translated “adjusted”. This is in keeping with this Book because it shows the present age to be better than the former.

Thus the ages were made and adjusted. Scripture speaks of age-times, of what was done before and since those times began. See Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2. These ages have their definite characteristics: their commencements, their continuation, and their culmination. They pass on one by one as revealed in the Word with their burden of sin and death, also of grace and glory.

The ages or time-periods through which is made known the unfolding purpose of God in His relation to man have been “framed” and “fitted” together by and in the Son. They are committed to Him for consecutive succession. The ages provide the platform upon which God is working out His redemptive purposes. Sin is dealt with, and gives way to a perfect state of peace, harmony, and love. It all comes about through Jesus Christ, God’s Son and Heir.

On the basis of the seven days of Creation (Gen. Chs. 1 & 2) there may be seven distinct ages of time in which God is working out His redemptive program, bringing in complete fullness of rest, restoration, and glorification. We suggest the following:

1. EDENIC AGE – It began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and ended with their expulsion from The Garden after God pronounced His judgment upon them, the serpent, and the ground.

2. ADAMIC AGE – It began with Adam and Eve outside the Garden, and ended with the Great Flood that destroyed all mankind except Noah and his family, all the animal kingdom except those in the ark and those that could exist in the water, and changed the surface of the earth.

3. NOAHIC AGE – It began with Noah and his family on the renovated earth and ended with the Tower of Babel and The Confusion of Tongues.

4. ABRAHAMIC AGE – It began with Abraham as the father of a new nation, and will end with “The Day of the Lord” in the end of “The Great Tribulation”.

5. MILLENNIAL AGE – This begins with the Lord destroying all His enemies and saving His faithful remnant in Israel. He will then reign through David on earth. It will end with Satan loose for “a little season”, and then His final overthrow with Gog and Magog. Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

6. FULNESS AGE – This age will see the final overthrow of death and put all things under Christ’s feet, uniting all in heaven and on earth in Christ (1 Cor. 15:25-27; Eph. 1:10).

7. AGES OF THE AGES – This will usher in the seventh day. “To whom be glory unto the ages of the ages” (Gal. 1:5).

Within the framework of all these ages there are dispensations, administration, economies during which God reveals His various ways of redemption. During the Abrahamic Age there are at least four distinct dispensations: (1) The Dispensation of Promise; (2) The Dispensation of Law; (3) The Dispensation of Pentecost; and (4) The Dispensation of the Secret.

Christ as the Son and Heir of all things will Himself reign supreme until heaven and earth are reconciled and united in Him, and the glorious consummation of the ages come to pass.

b. By His Creative Power

“And upholding all things by the word of His power”. The word “upholding” is pheron and might better be translated “maintaining or sustaining”. The Son is not an Atlas, sustaining the dead weight of the universe; He is not merely a steersman or pilot. He sees to it that all things consist or cohere. He carries on the development of the universe. He guides all things to their ultimate end. Something must be accomplished during the course of the ages, and the word of His power is pledged to bring it to pass.

There are several parallels in Col. 1:15-17 to Hebr. 1:1-3. Among them there is the expression: “and by Him all things consist”. “By the word” or rhema. The “word” is not a translation of logos. It differs from logos in that it is the word of command. It occurs four times in Hebrews – 1:3; 6:5; 11:3; 12:19. His word while He was here on earth was a miracle word. It called His disciples, it healed the sick, it stilled the storm, it drove out demons, and it raised the dead. There can be no catastrophe where there is the word of Christ, no chaos and no crisis.

The 29th Psalm is the Psalm of the Voice. It looks forward to that day when the Son of Man shall have brought all things on to the reign of peace. See also Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:6,9; Heb. 12:25-26.

4. AS SEEN IN HIS PROVISION

“When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”.

We need to keep in mind here that Hebrews has nothing to do with redemption from Egypt; its setting is the Wilderness and its center is the tabernacle. Salvation from initial sin in the evangelical sense of the gospel is not the theme of this Book. It deals with a saved people and their perfection in holiness by entering into the full blessing in Christ. This is the Gospel of 1 John 1:7 note: “...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from every sin”. The work of the Cross did not stop at the Cross. In the typology of the O.T. we find that the blood was not only poured around the altar, but was also sprinkled “before the veil” and also upon the mercy seat. See Lev. 4:6,17; 16:14.

So far in this lesson we have seen the glories of the Son in His Person, and the wonders of His office. We are now to see the majesty of His work.

a. A Purifying Redeemer – “by Himself purged our sins”.

While the words “Himself” and “our” are not in some manuscripts, yet they are not out of keeping with the truth here presented. “Himself” in contrast to all the multitudinous sacrifices of the Old Economy. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He did it alone, because only He could do it. He was by Himself. No one was with Him because none were like Him. He went where He went because none could go where He went. He went to the altar of God to make an offering and there was no lamb for the offering but Himself – “the Lamb of God”. He went alone into Gethsemane, to Gabbatha, to Golgotha, and to the grave.

The word translated “purged” is katharizo. It is used for the cleansing of a leper (Matt. 8:3) and the ceremonial cleansing of the outside of the cup (Matt. 23:25). This word is also used in Heb. 9:13,14,22,23; 10:22. These verses do not speak of the justification of the sinner, nor redemption out of bondage, but of purification. One of the types mentioned in Heb. 9:13 was that of The Red Heifer given in Numbers Ch. 19. Some of the details are as follows:

1. It was to be without spot or blemish, one which never had borne a yoke.
2. It was slain “without the camp” (See Heb. 13:12).
3. The whole heifer, together with cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet, was burned to ashes; these ashes were then used for purification.
4. Uncleanness was contracted by touching a dead body, or by being in a tent wherein a man died, or by touching a bone, or a grave.
5. Purification came by mixing the ashes with living water, and by sprinkling with a bunch of hyssop on the third and seventh days.
6. An unclean person that refused to be purified was cut off from the congregation; he had defiled the sanctuary.

The whole question here is one of defilement. Not only were the ashes of the heifer used for cleansing, but Heb. 9:19-22 tells us – “and almost all things are by the law purged with blood”. When we come to the study of Hebrews chapter nine we shall further see use of blood.

b. A Perfect Redeemer – “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”.

This “Son went from a cross to a crown. He went from the crucifixion to the coronation. What an exchange was this! He “sat down” because His work was done. By these words a contrast is drawn between Christ and Aaron. Aaron had to stand continually with all humility and reverence ministering before the Lord.

Here is seen first, the security and satisfaction of Christ’s work; and secondly, His glory and majesty because of an accomplished task.

“Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Heb. 1:13). The present possession of glory by Jesus Christ is the most conclusive evidence that all sin has been put away.

Seated in glory suggests several precious things concerning Christ: It is a place of Dignity. (See Job 29:7,8; Dan. 7:9,10; Rev. 5:13). It is a place of Duration. No one else will ever take this position from Him. He may leave it temporarily, as when He descends to earth to bring in His Kingdom, but it is His perpetually. It is also a place of Devotion. He will be devoted to His Father on whose right hand He sits, and to His people who need His ministry.

Four times in Hebrews Christ is said to be at the right hand of God: 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2.

CONCLUSION

What a finality and fullness we have in Christ! Israel, under the Old Covenant, had prophets; Christ is God’s final Spokesman. Israel was His people; Christ, God’s Son. Abraham was constituted “heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13): Christ is “heir of all things”. Moses made the tabernacle; Christ created “the ages”. The Law furnished “a shadow of good things to come”; Christ, is the brightness of God’s glory. In the O.T. there were theophanic manifestations of the Godhead; in Christ there is the very “express image of His person.

LESSON # 3 - BETTER THAN THE ANGELS

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:4 – 2:18

INTRODUCTION

1. The introduction to this Epistle which we have designated, The Prologue (1:1-3) is an altogether marvelous statement of truth. It reveals that the O.T. is the WORD OF ANTICIPATION, and that the N.T. is the WORD OF REALIZATION. The Anticipation: God spoke in time past – in many messages, by various methods, through many messengers unto the fathers. The Realization: God speaks in the present time by One, His Son, or “in Son”.

2. Two key words: PERFECTION and PERDITION.

“Let us go on unto perfection” (6:1).

“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition” (10:39).

This Epistle sets forth for the Hebrews the way of perfection. It is not a matter of their initial salvation; but of a going on from the Old Covenant Economy to the New Covenant Economy. To go on to the New is perfection; to draw back to the Old brings perdition.

3. Christ’s essential nature and His mediatorial work. These must always be distinguished and kept in mind. Many have gone astray and greatly erred in the matter of Christ’s essential nature because they have failed to make this distinction. Such passages as John 14:28 and 1 Cor. 15:28 refer to Christ’s ministerial work. John 1:1-3 speaks of His essential nature.

4. Why does the author begin by bringing in angels? When he plans to discuss the greatness of the New Covenant over that of the Old Covenant it would seem wise to begin with Moses – the mediator of the Old Covenant. There are mainly two reasons for this: First, angels were held by the Jews as the most exalted of created beings. See such passages as: Gen. 16:7; 19:1; Exod. 3:2; Num. 20:16; Isa. 63:9. Second, because their Law was given at Mt. Sinai by the instrumentality of angels (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). So they concluded that the Mosaic Dispensation had come to abide. God had come to them in this economy with multiplied angels (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17). But a new economy has come in, in which “a Son” is greater than angels. He is superior in every way to these exalted ones of God’s creation. It is true that the angels were Mediators, Protectors, and Communicators. But this One – The Son was the same in a “better” way because He comes with a better Covenant.

5. Quotations from the O.T. As the glory of The Son was set forth in a sevenfold statement in verses 2-3; so His superiority to angels is enforced by seven quotations from the O.T.

Verse 5 quoted in Ps. 2:7; Verse 5 quoted in 2 Sam. 7:14;

Verse 6 quoted from Deut. 32:43; Verse 7 quoted from Ps. 104:4;

Verse 8 quoted from Ps. 45:6-7; Verse 10 quoted from Ps. 102:25-27;

Verse 13 quoted from Ps. 110:1.

6. Note the sevenfold imagery in this first chapter:

- (1) Effulgence of glory. (2) Image of substance. (3) Angels as wind and fire.
- (4) Oil of gladness. (5) Old like a garment. (6) Like a mantle. (7) Enemies, a footstool.

7. In chapter one, the true Deity of the Son is proved, thus He is higher than the angels: in chapter two, His true humanity is proved, thus He is higher than the angels: in chapter two, His true humanity is proved, thus He is lower than the angels. These

two chapters furnish us with the greatest statement in the Bible on the two natures of the God-Man, the son, Jesus Christ.

I. BECAUSE HE IS HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS (4-14) HIS DEITY.

1. In His Excellent Character (4-6)

The angels too are considered excellent. See Ps. 103:20; 104:4; Dan.7:10; Matt. 24:36; 25:31; 28:2-3; Rev. 5:11.

a. He has a better Name (4-5a)

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?”

This name He got by inheritance. Heirship indicates sonship. Angels are called “sons of God” (Gen. 6:2,4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). But they are sons by creation only. None of the angels were “begotten” sons of God; nor could they call God their Father.

This quotation comes from Psalm 2:7. Man becomes a son of God by faith in Christ and His work of salvation. There are three times in which Christ has become the firstborn son:

1. When He assumed creature form – Col. 1:15 says: “The firstborn of every creature”. He assumed creature form in order to create.

2. When He assumed human form (soulical body) - At His incarnation He became God’s Son (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:32-33; Jn. 1:14) See also Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:13.

3. When He assumed spirit form (resurrection) – Col. 1:18.

It was the Father who “gave His only begotten son” (John 3:16).

b. He has a better nature (5b-6)

“And again, I will be to Him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship Him”. This is quoted from 2 Sam. 7:14 and Ps. 97:7.

The nature of sonship by birth is greater than the nature of angels by creation. So angels as created sons must worship Him who is the “only begotten Son”. Great is the security and honor of the Church when the Head of it is worshipped by the innumerable host of angels.

Therefore as “heirs of salvation” there could be no point in worshipping those who are mere messengers. So His name is linked also with His nature. The word for “name” is onoma (Greek) and shem (Hebrew). It indicates (1) Glory, reputation among men; (2) a man’s character as recognized and made known to others by his conduct. God’s name known by His acts of redemption in Egypt; (3) A man’s authority as ruler or magistrate – to cast out demons in the name of Jesus.

Rev. 5:11-14 reveals that all heaven will worship the Lamb on the eve of His return to the earth, when He comes with power and great glory. See also Matt. 13:41; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7.

2. In His Exalted Conduct (7-14)

The angels in contrast are spoken of in a twofold ministry: “Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire”. (7) This is quoted from Psalm 104:4.

This could be translated “his messengers winds, and his ministers a flame of fire”. Here it is again made clear that angels are to serve as subordinates and worshippers, rather than being worshipped and adored as sovereigns.

This gives us information as to the nature of angels: They are subtle, pervasive, mobile, energetic as wind; they are intense, brilliant, powerful as fire, and can be destructive when they are employed as ministers of wrath. This nature is of Divine appointment; created as such. Because of this nature they control the elements – wind (Rev. 7:1); and fire (Rev. 8:5; 14:18; Acts 7:30).

Angels are likened to “wind” because of the power to render themselves invisible; because of their great power (2 Kings 19:35); because of their great speed (Dan. 9:21,23). Angels are also likened to “fire” because fire speaks of Divine judgment. Angels execute God’s wrath. See Gen. 19:13; Ps. 78:49 (Egypt); Matt. 13:41-42; Rev. 20:15. Angels have a brilliant brightness as fire and can be terrifying in their appearance (Num. 22:31; Matt. 28:2-4; Rev. 19:10).

a. As a Better Ruler (8-9: 13-14)

We have quotations in these verses from Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1. Angels are only servants; the Son is the absolute Sovereign.

We have seen Jesus Christ as:

Prophet (Vr. 2) – He speaks forth and teaches.

Priest (Vr. 3) – He offered a sacrifice which purged sins.

Potentate (Vr. 3,8,13) – Here now He is sovereign, a King in all His glory. His is an everlasting throne, and a scepter of righteousness, an authority of righteousness.

A Throne – Note that this Son is addressed as “The God”. It is a throne that will last unto the age of the ages. Satan had a throne once but lost it.

A Scepter – This scepter is righteousness. Satan’s scepter is unrighteousness. He is a liar, murderer (See Gen. 49:10). First occurrence of “Scepter” in O.T. is above; last is Zech. 10:11. Christ has been appointed Potentate because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. For this reason God anointed Him “with the oil of gladness above His fellows”. This has no doubt reference to the ancient method instituted by God when the kings of Israel were established in office (See 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kgs. 1:39). It was because of this that the kings were styled “the Lord’s anointed” (2 Sam. 19:21), and “the anointed of the Lord” (Lam. 4:20). Christ has received a kingdom far more replete with enjoyment than ever conferred upon any other ruler. In its extent and duration, its multitude and magnitude it far exceeds any kingdom of angels.

Angels are only ministering spirits. They are employed in behalf of those who inherit salvation. They ministered to Lot (Gen. Ch. 19); to Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:5); Isaiah (Isa. 6:7); Daniel (6:22; 9:20-27; 10:11-12); Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20); Mary (Luke 1:26-38; Apostles in prison (Acts 5:19-20).

It is to be noted that the use of the word “salvation” in this Epistle gives no reference to a clear evangelical statement of the initial way of salvation. This is an Epistle of the Wilderness Journey, its Tabernacle, its Camp, and the Rest that Remaineth, its Temptations and its Perils. The title “Savior” never occurs in Hebrews. In Acts 5:31 Christ is called both “a Prince and a Savior”. In Hebrews the title “Prince” is retained in 2:10 and 12:2. The Greek word archegon is used in all three places. But the word “savior” is omitted. The contexts of both passages speak of suffering in view of glory, rather than suffering to expiate sin. So Hebrews speaks of Christ as Captain and Leader, and a salvation that is to be inherited at the Second Advent of Christ.

We do not believe that angels in any way minister to the members of the church of the One Body. We are in immediate contact with our glorious Head. Angels are mentioned some 50 times in the Gospels, some 20 times in Acts, and some 70 times in Revelation, or 140 times in all. In Paul's Epistles, omitting Hebrews, there are only 14 references to angels. Of these 14 only one is found in the Prison Epistles (Col. 2:18) where the apostle warns against the worship of angels in contrast with "holding the Head". So in his Prison Epistles, angels are really not referred to at all. In Hebrews angels are mentioned 13 times, but here we have Hebrew believers ministered to by the New Covenant. The Church of the One Body has authorities, thrones and dominions. Angels are no doubt of lower rank in that glorious sphere. They are God's messengers, not princes of that sphere.

b. As A Better Creator (10-12)

These verses are quoted from Psalm 102:25-27. That Christ alone is the Creator of the Universe is seen in other places, such as John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17.

But this creation "shall perish: ... they shall wax old as doth a garment; ... thou shalt fold them up, and they shall be changed". Only the Creator is immutable, unchangeable, eternally the same. "Thou remainest" we are told and "thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail".

Angels have fallen; He is to judge them and to put all principalities and powers under His feet. He holds a position of Divine Glory, seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high". He has a service in Heaven, both royal and priestly, such as that of Melchisedek. He will have a future triumph over all His enemies.

The angels are seen to be inferior, both to the Son (5-13) and also to the heirs of salvation (14). The angels have a ministry, but it is limited.

The expression: "Thou shalt fold them up" intimates the absolute control over all creation, animate and inanimate, by Christ. He that made all, and preserves all, can also alter and destroy all. He is the Potter, all else the clay to be molded as He will. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. 33:6); by the same word shall they be "folded up". Such a Lord can be fully trusted.

II. THE FIRST INTERLUDE (2:1-4)

This section, which interludes the argument of superiority over angels, begins a series of five warnings found in this Epistle.

1. The First Warning (2:1-4) against drifting away, through neglect of the word spoken.
2. The Second Warning (3:17 – 4:3) the danger of coming short of the promised rest.
3. The Third Warning (5:12 – 6:2) the failure to come to spiritual maturity.
4. The Fourth Warning (10:26-27) against willful sin after that we have received the truth.
5. The Fifth Warning (12:14-29) the absolute importance of being holy. A nominal religion is useless.

We have here the perils of Drifting, of Departure, of Deterioration, of Despising, and of Degeneracy.

"So great salvation" – The word "salvation" occurs seven times in this Epistle: "Heirs of salvation" (1:14); "So great salvation" (2:3); "Captain of salvation" (2:10); "Things that accompany salvation" (6:9); "Salvation to the uttermost" (7:25); "His appearance the second time without sin unto salvation" (9:28); "Unto the salvation of his house" (11:7).

When God speaks, man better hear and heed. God's words are not idle words. We can never be indifferent to them; because if we do, we will suffer the consequences. The words spoken by The Son in this "great salvation" should not be passed over hastily. They beckon us away from the vague religiousness, ritualism, and ecclesiasticism of any age to the riches of Christ. The Hebrew Christians were in danger of drifting back into Judaism. See 2 Cor. 11:3; Col. 2:8. Chapter 2:1-4 should be read following 1:1-3 and chapter 2:5 reads on from 1:14.

Because God in His Son is the speaker (1:1-3), therefore the more earnest heed should be given to the things which He says lest the hearer drift away from them (2:1). If the judgment of sin under the Law, given through angels stood fast (2:2), how could the greater judgment under grace, pronounced by God Himself, be escaped? This great salvation was first announced by the Lord, then confirmed by the apostles, and finally attested by miracles of the Pentecostal Era (3-4).

1. By Considering the Revelation (1)

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed (pay closer attention) to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (drift away)".

The words "to give the more earnest heed" are literally "to give heed more abundantly" (Wuest). "Give heed" is the translation of prosecho, which means "to hold to.

The words "let them slip" are the translation of pararuomen, which could be translated, "should drift past them". The word is used of a ring slipping from the fingers. The word also means "to flow". Vincent quotes a rendering of Proverbs 4:21 – "Let not my words flow past before thine eyes".

Salvation may be compared to a great harbor from which we may drift away through neglect. Paul "gave heed" to the Jew's religion when he was in it (Gal. 1:14). There is the duty of holding fast in view of the danger of drifting away. Christ is the anchor of our faith and hope. Let nothing deter us from Him. It is impossible to let slip the words of Divine Truth without sliding away ourselves. Moses and Aaron are here examples of neglecting the Word of God (See Num. 20:1-13). The warning is given again in Heb. 12:25-26. The things which they had heard were the words of 1:1-3.

2. By Comparing The Record (2)

"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward".

The word "if" represents a fulfilled condition, not a hypothetical case. The words "spoken by angels" is the Old Covenant (Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19; Deut. 27:26).

"Transgression" is the word parabasis – a stepping over the line. "Disobedience" is parakoe – imperfect hearing, neglectful or listless hearing.

The O.T. Law received and demanded the utmost of reverent attention from God's people, who studied it night and day (Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2), and accounted it more precious than gold (Ps. 19:10).

There was absolutely no escape under the Old Economy. Moses bore witness to the fact that transgression and disobedience caused him to forfeit the land of Canaan. Israel wandered in the Wilderness for 38 years because of unbelief. Eli, Saul, and David enforce the principle of what happens when one breaks the Law. Israel brought the judgment of God upon her when she danced around the golden calf. God further vindicated His Law by punishment to Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-7); to Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:1ff); to Achan (Josh. Ch. 7); and also by the historical judgments against Israel and Judah, in sending them to captivity.

3. By Conforming To The Result (3-4)

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will”.

The “we” here is emphatic. The word “how” is pos, - “How is it possible?” The rhetorical question expresses a denial. “How shall we make good our escape?” (12:25)

Salvation is both an exodus and an eisodus, an out of, and an into. “And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers” (Deut. 6:23). This Book associates itself with the Wilderness experiences of Israel; and her lack of faith to enter into the Promised Land and her subsequent wandering and death in the wilderness.

The salvation of Israel is always a national salvation (See Ps. 14:7; 98:2-3; Isa. 11:11; 12:1-6; 52:9-10; Rev. 19:1).

a. Of The Lord’s Communication – “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord”. What was the “salvation” that the Lord proclaimed? It was the good news that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17; Mk. 1:14-15). This salvation has to do, not with a coming out of Egypt and bondage, but an entrance into the blessings of the kingdom. It is the eisodus act of salvation.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matt. 4:23).

Here we have a salvation program which had the entrance of the kingdom in mind, and a healing program commensurate with that entrance. That kingdom will be a perfect kingdom.

Christ’s ministry while here on earth was a confirmatory one, as we see from Rom. 15:8. He proclaimed the kingdom as at hand and worked miracles in the three realms of disease, demons, and death. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22).

b. Of the Apostle’s Confirmation – “And was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will”.

Many “signs, wonders, and miracles” were done by the Apostles. See Acts 2:43; 3:6-8; 4:16; 4:22,30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6; 13:11; 14:8-10; 15:12; 16:18; 19:11-12; 20:9-10; 28:3-9.

All these miraculous manifestations were in the form of:

1. Signs – semeion: a sign, mark or token which is miraculous in nature.
2. Wonders – teras: Something so strange as to cause it to be watched, miraculous in nature.
3. Miracles – dunamis: a supernatural act which has in it the inherent power of God.
4. Gifts – merismos: distributions or impartations from the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:8-11 gives a full description and comment upon the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit. Cpr. Mark 16:15-18 with Hebr. 2:4.

These were all “signs following” – not mere prodigies or marvels; but mighty acts that SIGNified something.

They were powers of the coming age (Heb. 6:5). Into that evil age of demonic control came the power of another age when all evil influences would be cast out and destroyed.

Into this veritable Babel comes the power of that age with its new tongues; in that age the serpent will no longer tempt and destroy; in that age deadly things will do no hurt; in that age sickness shall flee away.

As an illustration of the miracle being a “sign, wonder, power” see the miracle of Peter and John in Acts Chs. 3-4.

The same words that are used of the mighty works of Christ and His apostles are used of the Wicked One – “Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). Note that the only difference here is in the added word “lying”. These miracles will constitute the “strong delusion” of the last days. This is why we are admonished to “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1-3).

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation”? There is absolutely no escape. Perfection in knowing and accepting the truth for today is no less a supreme need than it was then. See Eph. 4:12-16).

II. BECAUSE HE IS LOWER THAN THE ANGELS (2:5-18) (Humanity)

The word “For” (gar) resumes the thread of the argument about the superiority of Jesus Christ over the angels. It does not refer to the first four verses of chapter two; but goes back to 1:14.

In 1:4-14 the Holy Spirit has furnished a sevenfold proof of the superiority of Israel’s Messiah over the angels. The proof is taken from their own Scriptures and as such was clear and incontrovertible.

In 2:1-4 a parentheses was made to give a solemn and searching application to the conscience and heart of the Hebrews: that as God punished the disobedient under the Law, so He would under the New Covenant of grace. They could not “neglect so great salvation” without penalty.

Beginning now at 2:5 an objection is anticipated and answered: How could supremacy be predicted of One Who became man and died? The Jews venerated angels above the fathers – Abraham, Moses, Joshua and David. And in a sense rightly so because it is said: “They excel in strength” (Ps. 103:20). Thus a difficulty arose because angels are not men and cannot die.

The key is found in verse 9, which shows that the humiliation, suffering, and death of Christ did not tarnish His glory, but became the meritorious cause of His exaltation.

Another key is found in the expression “the world to come” (5). The word “world” here is neither “kosmos” nor “aeon”. It is oikoumene, and means “the habitable earth”. The same word is used in Heb. 1:6, “when he bringeth again the firstbegotten into the world”. This coming again into the world to come is not heaven, but a renovated earth under the reign of The Messiah – The Millennial kingdom. The Scriptures speak of four earths: The Pre-Adamic; The Present; The Millennial; The New Earth. “The world to come” is the time when Israel shall dwell in her own land in peace and plenty; when wars shall cease and all shall be manifesting His glory.

There are too many who do not realize that the work of Christ on this earth has been interrupted by Israel’s rejection of Him. This very earth which was the scene of His sufferings, is also to be the witness of His glory. Satan and his hosts hold sway today over this earth; but will ultimately be deposed (See Isa. 24:21-23). The government will then be placed upon the shoulders of Christ (Isa. 9:6-7).

It is not to angels that God is going to subject this new world. But who is it? It will be through a Man, as we will see.

What a contradiction is man? See him from one side and He is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” as the Spirit depicted him in the Laodicean Church. And yet on the other hand one sees majesty rebelling against all his degradation. This very contradiction appears in one of Robert Burn’s philosophical works,. At one point he makes the aged man of the poem say: “I’ve seen yon weary winter-sun, Twice forty times return, And ev’ry times has added

proofs, That man was made to mourn”. But a few stanzas later the sage reveals the undying protest of his soul, “If I’m designed yon Lordling’s slave – By nature’s law designed – Why was an independent wish, E’er planted in my mind”? On moment made to mourn, the next to reign.

The Epistle now reverts to the main line of teaching, after the warning given in 2:1-4. The author will show that it is not to angels, but to men, in the representative Man Christ Jesus, is the coming habitable world to be subjected.

The Son is therefore better than the angels, not only as the revealer of God (chapter one), but also, as the representative Man. It will be through the channels of suffering and death that He will become the true High-Priest bringing man to his original glory.

In this section, the author quotes from four O.T. passages: Psalm 8 at verses 6-8; Psalm 22:22 at verse 12; Isa. 8:17 at verse 13; Isa. 8:18 at verse 13. The last two references are from the Septuagint Version.

1. God’s Original Purpose (6-8a)

These verses are a quotation from the 8th Psalm.

“What is man”? This question is asked four times in Scripture – Ps. 8:4; 144:3; Job 7:17-20; and Heb. 2:6. God created Adam to rule the world – on land, over the sea and the air.

a. His Creation – “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels” (Vr. 7). (See also Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). God made Adam in the likeness of His image. This may have reference to his whole being – physical, mental, and moral. God also made him a companion (Gen. 2:21-25). Man had fellowship with God – God visited with him. God made Divine visitation and love communion with His creatures. Fellowship with God on a creature basis was Adam’s experience.

b. His Coronation – “Thou crownest him with glory and honor”. Man was created on the sixth day as the last of God’s created beings. God gave him wisdom and understanding so he could classify and name all creation under him (Gen. 2:19).

c. His Dominion – “set him over the works of His hands”. Man was given dominion over all the fish, the fowl, and the animals of the earth (Gen. 1:26,28).

God set him over the works of His hands. Man was intended to be God’s ruler on earth, a representative King, a Monarch, and a Sovereign over all the lower orders on earth.

The sun was to labor for him during the day, and the moon to control the tides that cleanse the coasts by night. The elements of nature to be his servants, flowers to scent his path, fruits to please his palate, birds to sing his sweetest songs, fish to provide his food, and beasts to toil for him and carry him. God made him a ruler, a little lower than the angels.

In the sphere of exploration man has refused to consider any section of the globe closed to him. Torrid deserts and icy wastes are alike beaten into submission. Men will die rather than admit defeat. Man has conquered the lofty Mt. Everest; he has plumbed the deepest depths of the ocean; he has roamed vast spaces outside our globe. Man seems to have conquered everything except himself.

We note that the author introduces Psalm 8 by simply saying: “But one in a certain place testified, saying”, etc. Why does he omit, “David, said in the eighth Psalm, or “written in the Psalms”? It is because “God hath spoken” (1:1); “the Lord hath spoken” (2:3).

2. Man’s Present Predicament (8b)

“But now we see not yet all things put under Him”. There is a strange futility attached to all of man’s triumph. Continually advancing, yet arriving nowhere. Every new era is hailed as a millennial age, but it only leaves him disillusioned. Is there a reason? Yes, a big one! It is

spelled S I N. Man goes forth conquering, but not really to conquer, because he has failed to conquer himself.

It is still true as an ancient prophet depicted humanity: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isa. 1:5-6).

Man’s crown is rolled in the dust, his honor tarnished and stained, his sovereignty disputed. Sin has brought man low, debasing, disfiguring, and blasting all it touches. Man stands utterly helpless and hopeless to affect his own salvation.

Man is no longer what God intended. He was created upright and innocent, with a sense of full authority and dominion. By his own voluntary act he became a sinner, for “by one man sin entered the world and death by sin” (Rom. 5:12). So this is a “habitable world” of sin and death. All are under sin (Rom 3:10) and guilty before God (3:19), and subject to death (5:12). “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom 8:19-23).

Psalms eight looks back to Adam in his original estate and his present condition; but also forward to Christ in His humiliation and exaltation. Rom. 5:14 supplies the link: “Adam ... who is the figure of him that was to come”. In 1 Cor. 15:45-47 we read: “The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving Spirit. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven”. Psalms eight looks at the first and second Man, the first and last Adam. Viewing the first Adam in his frailty and fall, the Psalmist asks: “What is man that Thou art mindful of him”? Of the Second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, a prophet exclaims: “He shall not fail” (Isa. 42:4).

3. God’s Perfect Provision (9-18)

Jesus Christ is better and higher than angels because He is lower than they. In 1:4-14 He is seen as higher; and now in 2:9-18 He is seen as lower. Like the first Adam He was made lower in His person (2:5-8) and now in 2:9-18 He is seen as lower in His performance.

What a day it must have been for the angelic world when they saw their Lord stoop down in the incarnation and take the form of a servant, wrapped in the garb of human flesh! Then they saw their Creator hungry, weary, thirsty, homeless, and naked.

There are many arresting statements in these verses: “Bringing many sons unto glory”. “Make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering”. “He also likewise took part of the same” (our nature). “Through death He might destroy him that had the power of death”. “Made like unto His brethren”. “To make propitiation for the sins of the people”. “Able to succour them that are tempted”.

“But we see Jesus”. The name “Jesus” is most appropriate, for it is His human name – the name of the incarnation, the humiliation, the Garden of Gethsemane and the hill Golgotha.

a. Made Perfect Through Suffering (9-13)

“Jesus ... made lower than the angels” (9). He is seen here in verse nine as experiencing “the suffering of death” and “taste death for every man”. This Jesus Who “for a little while was made inferior to angels” in order that He might accomplish through redemption what God had purposed for human kind.

“For” (or better “by” or “through”) “the suffering and tasting of death He was “crowned with glory and honor”. Some feel that this expression suggests that He was crowned “for death”. It may have reference to the Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:17-18). This was closely associated with His death (See Matt. 16:28; 17:9).

The “suffering of death” and “taste death” means more than simply dying. The fact of death is the result of sin. The Lord took upon Himself our sin (Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21;

Heb. 9:28). Hence the death of our Lord was a slow and painful process all through His earthly life. He lived under the shadow of the cross. Crucifixion was but the consummation of His suffering and tasting of death. (See Matt. 16:21; Mk. 8:31; Luke 9:22). At Gethsemane He drained the bitter cup of sin and suffering. There He actually “tasted” the curse which sin brings, the penalty of the broken law, the manifestation of the power of the Devil, the expression of the wrath of God. In all this He “tasted death” to the very last. He tasted sin with all its suffering which ultimately led to the actual experience of death on the cross (See Matt. 26:42; Heb. 5:7).

But out of this “suffering” and “tasting” of death would come “glory and honor”. This “glory and honor” made Him a priest like unto Melchisedec (See Heb. 2:17 with 7:21-26).

“Captain of salvation ... Perfect through suffering” (10). “It became Him” – It was fitting for Christ to both suffer and die because through this means He would be “bringing many sons unto glory”. His perfect work would bring many to a perfect end. “Glory” represents God’s perfection, His ultimate end for His sons.

The word “captain” is archegon in the original and could be translated “Prince” or “Leader”. It is found four times in the N.T. – Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb. 2:10; 12:2. The idea is that of one who leads or proceeds on the way to glory. Christ is the Leader, and Joshua is the type. This may be seen from 4:8 – “For if Jesus (better Joshua) had given them rest”, etc. We keep in mind that Hebrews is not dealing with Moses and the Passover Redemption of Egypt, but with Joshua and the survival through the awful temptations and trials of the wilderness unto the triumph of the entry into the Promised Land. The word “archegon” occurs also in Heb. 12:2 where we see it in connection with suffering and perfection of faith. He was the true leader of the great company of men and women of faith as seen in chapter eleven.

“We are heirs of God, if sons; but we are joint-heirs with Christ if so be we suffer with Him (Rom. 8:17). Present affliction is temporal in duration and light in comparison with the aionion weight of glory which it works out for those who are exercised by it and whose eyes see beyond the temporal and visible. ‘The fellowship of His sufferings’ is a necessary prelude to the fellowship of His glory. ‘Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning’” – C.H. Welch.

The Captain of our salvation understands our weakness and our needs. He gives riches for our needs, rest for our weariness.

The completeness of the sanctified. “Both sanctifier and they who are sanctified are all of one” (Vr. 11). “All of one” is sanctification (11); in nature (14); in death and deliverance (14-15); in nature again (17); in temptation (18). This oneness refers back to verse 10 where we read of “many sons”.

So both the Sanctifier and those sanctified are one in the Father, one in the family, one in the flock, one in favor, and one in fellowship.

The words translated “all of one” are literally “out of one”. And no doubt means that both Christ and the sons are out of the one Father – God. That means then of course that we are one in and with Christ. We are one with Him in His purity (sanctification), in His peace, and in His purpose. The sanctified have the mind of Christ, the ministry of Christ, and the merits of Christ. We are made partakers of His holiness, made perfect in His holiness, and made presentable by His holiness.

The words “sanctifieth” and “sanctified” are from the basic word “hagiazo”. This word occurs seven times in Hebrews – 2:11 (twice); 9:13; 10:10; 10:14; 10:29; 13:12. Sanctification of the Spirit is not mentioned once in Hebrews. It is always connected with the sufferings of the Leader of our salvation, and His once-for-all sacrifice for the purification from sins and uncleanness. The word is closely associated with consecration.

“Not ashamed to call them brethren”, “my brethren” (11-12). Jesus Christ is in His divine nature God the Son, and not simply a son of God as believers, yet as Man He does not hesitate to call Himself our brother. This is quoted from Psalms 22:22 – “I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee”. In this Messianic Psalm He

takes His stand with redeemed believers, joining with them in adoration and praise of the Father. Jesus called His followers “brethren” here on earth (Matt. 12:49; John 20:17; Matt. 25:40). While Christ called His followers by the designation, “brethren”; yet we do not have any example of the saints calling Him by this name. He is given the titles of dignity.

The 22nd Psalm is the Psalm of suffering and victory for the Messiah. How fitting to be quoted here in the context of suffering and death, and victory. This Psalm has been called “The Great Cross Psalm.” In Vrs. 20-21 the Suffering Savior is heard to cry: “Deliver my soul from the sword (of Divine justice – Zech. 13:7); my darling from the power of the dog (the Gentiles – Matt. 15:24-26). Save me from the lion’s mouth (the Devil – 1 Pet. 5:8); for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn”.

In verse 13 he quotes again from the O.T. (Isa. 8:17-18). “I will put my trust in Him” (A.V.). The Hebrew reads: “And I shall wait expectantly for him”. The quote in the A.V. is from the Septuagint version. Christ here assumes the same faith and trust in God as believers must occupy. The second quote: “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” is from Isa. 8:18. Isaiah’s children Shear-jashub, meaning: “A remnant shall return” shows that there will be a repentant perfected number of Christ’s covenant children. The younger son, maher-shalal-hash-baz, means “Hurry to the plunder, Haste to the spoil” (Isa. 7:3; 8:1-3). Here is the sign of victory.

Our commitment to Christ must be as complete as His commitment to God. This commitment must be made without the slightest indication of reluctance or reservation.

b. MADE PERFECT THROUGH DEATH (14-16)

These verses now touch upon the very heart of the message, “a little lower than the angels”. Here we see the depth of His humiliation, His willingness to stoop lower than the angels in taking human nature and subjecting Himself to death.

We shall now see that Christ meets man’s need in every realm. The Sinner’s material state: “flesh and blood”, His mental state: “fear of death”, His moral state: “subject to bondage”. The Savior’s material state: Descended to “flesh and blood”, Destruction of the Devil, relieving the sinner of mental fear; and delivering believers from all their moral bondage in sin.

The connection between these verses and the preceding context is this: Since it became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering; and, since according to Old Testament prophecies, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, the Savior and the saved, must be of the same race; and since the saved are human beings, the Son of God, the appointed Savior, assumed a nature capable of suffering and death – even the nature of man. It was in this nature of man that He must die, and by dying accomplish the great purpose of His appointment, the destruction of Satan’s power, and the deliverance of His people.

Death, Destruction, and Deliverance are the three key words of this passage. The word “death” (thanatos) occurs five times in this chapter: “For the suffering of death” (Vr.9); “should taste death” (Vr.9); “That through death” (Vr.14); “The power of death” (Vr. 14); “Fear of death” (Vr. 15).

Christ by His death brought to naught the “power of death”. Satan uses death to frighten his subjects. Christ through His death has robbed Satan of this mighty weapon, for He broke the association between sin and death. It was sin that brought death. Nothing can now separate us from the love of god, not even death (Rom. 8:38).

1. As Kins-man Redeemer (14-16)

“Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; ... for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham”.

The original says: “For not indeed of angels takes he hold, but of the seed of Abraham He takes hold”. The Hebrew word gaal is translated “Kinsman, Redeem, Redeemer, and Avenger” (Lev. 25; Num. 35; Ruth).

This truth of the Kins-man Redeemer is typified in the story of Ruth. Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, went to Moab from Bethlehem in a time of famine. Hence they forfeited all their inheritance in Canaan. Naomi came back, after the death of her husband and two sons, with Ruth. Ruth found and married a kinsman of her husband, Boaz, who redeemed the inheritance. He was both willing and able.

So Christ has taken part in our material creation – “flesh and blood” that He might deliver us from our moral condition of bondage in sin and the “fear of death”. He took on Him the nature of all men; not the person of any man.

The common bond demanded the common substance, and the common substance demanded the common experience. He was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The death of Christ being judicial or legal; it also became actual in the “sons” for whom He died. He took the penalty of sin, namely death, upon Himself and satisfied the justice of God. He thus removed the fear of death, the sting of death, the reality of death for every believer.

“That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”. “It is most blessed to note the bearing of this statement upon the special point the apostle was discussing. The Jews were stumbled by the fact that their Messiah had died. Here the Holy Spirit showed that so far from that death tarnishing the glory of Christ, it exemplified it, for by death He overthrew the great Enemy and delivered His captive people. Not only is He glorious in heaven, but He hath conquered Satan in the very place where he exercised his sad dominion over men, and where the judgment of God lay heavily upon men” – J.N. Darby.

“The means whereby Christ overcame Satan is expressly said to be death. To achieve this great and glorious victory against so mighty an enemy, Christ did not assemble troops of angels, as He could have done (Matt. 26:53), nor did He array Himself with majesty and terror, as in Exodus 19:16; but He did it by taking part of weak flesh and blood, and thereby humbling Himself to death. In this respect the apostle saith, that Christ ‘having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross’ (Col. 2:15), meaning thereby, His death. The apostle there resembleth the cross of Christ to a trophy whereon the spoils of enemies were hanged. Of old conquerors were wont to hang the armour and weapons of enemies vanquished on the walls of forts and towers” – Dr. Gouge.

“That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”. There is a striking type of this fact in Judges 14:12-19 – Samson’s riddle. The greatest “eater” or consumer is death. Out of death has come life (John 12:24). The natural man is utterly unable to solve this riddle. The secret of the death of Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, must be revealed. A change of raiment was provided for those to whom the riddle was explained – a foreshadowing of the “robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10).

“Took on Him the seed of Abraham” – During World War II the king and queen of England shared the privations of their subjects in all things. When the windows of the King’s private apartments in Buckingham Palace were shattered by air raids, he waited his turn like any private citizen to have them repaired. The royal family received the same ration cards, and saved their meat coupons for Sunday roast. The blue line around the bathtubs marked the five inch line of water. The great park at Windsor Castle was plowed for growing wheat. The king’s carriage

horses were sent to the farm. The queen drove her station wagon to collect paper, bones, scrap metal in national drives. She ordered 60 sets of furniture from Windsor Castle delivered to poor families with damaged homes. They walked among the rubble of bombed homes. They shared the same privations and dangers as everyone else.

2. As Death Overcomer (15)

“Through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, ... the devil”.

Man, down through the ages, has had a startling fear of death, and rightly so. It has been a tormenting fear, resting on the soul of mortal man like the pall of a perpetual night. It haunts the conscience of a sinful man like the slinking shadows of innumerable ghosts. Guilty man knows that he is destined to die, deserves to die, and shall be deserted to die unless he accepts the only Savior from death. It is impossible for sinful man to evade, erase or escape his misspent life.

But death holds no real terror of bondage for the ones who know Him Who conquered death – “Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

Therefore we can say with Paul: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). Paul also says: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23).

“Afraid? Of what? To feel the spirit’s glad release? To pass from pain to perfect peace, the strife and strain of life to cease? Afraid? Of what? Afraid? Of What? Afraid to see the Savior’s face, to hear His welcome, and to trace the glory gleam from wounds of grace? Afraid? Of that?”

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55,57).

Note 1 – The words “flesh and blood” are joined together five times in the N.T. – Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 15:50; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 6:12; and Heb. 2:14. This emphasizes the weakness and limitations of man. It was this Christ took in order to have a judicial, substitutionary, vicarious death. Christ became a real man – not in show or appearance.

Note 2 – The verb rendered “destroy” in verse 14 is katargeo (from kata, down; and argos, idle). It could be rendered “annul”, or “to bring to naught”, “to render inactive”. It is translated in various ways Luke 13:7 – “cumbereth”; Rom 3:3 – “without effect”; Rom. 3:31 – “make void”; Rom. 6:6 – “might be destroyed”; Rom. 7:2 – “is loose^{3d}”; 1 Cor. 1:28 – “bring to naught”; 2 Cor. 3:13 – “is abolished”; Gal. 5:4 – “become of no effect”.

Note 3 – In the light of certain passages does Satan have absolute power over death? See Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 68:20. Satan is spoken of as a “murderer” (John 8:44). In answer to this, Dr. John C. Page says: “Does the devil have “the power of death”? Yes, the power to enforce it, but not to inflict it. ... Satan cannot go beyond the permissive will of God”. The dictionary defines enforce: “to give force to; strengthen; to urge with energy; constrain; compel”. It defines inflict: “to strike, to give by striking; to cause something damaging or painful; to be endured; impose”.

c. MADE PERFECT THROUGH PROPITIATION (17-18)

“...a merciful and faithful high priest ... to make propitiation for the sins of the people”.

The word translated “reconciliation” (A.V.) is better translated “propitiation” (eis to hilaskesthai, from hilaskomai). See also Luke 18:13; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). The word means satisfaction and has to do with the mercy seat on the ark.

Christ made it possible for God to be consistent in His nature and forgive and reconcile man to Himself. His justice could not overlook sin and His love could not be indifferent to the sinner. So what His righteousness demanded, His love provided in the person of Christ.

In this work of propitiation God offers to Himself His Son as the sacrifice. He is both the One who propitiates, and the One who is propitiated. It is God Himself who both judges His Son, and suffers in His Son. There can be no criticism of God’s way of “bringing many sons to glory”.

Thomas Hooker, after careful study of 2 Cor. 5:21 wrote: “This only do I desire to know, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered. God hath taken upon Himself the sin of man, that man may take upon himself the righteousness of God”.

“One thing I know, that when the crimson flow dropped to the earth below, it fell on me. Mine eyes were opened wide, I saw the crucified, and knew for me He died on Calvary”.

In Hebrews 9:5 hilasterion is translated “mercy seat”. In the doctrine of Romans the mercy seat is seen in 3:25 – “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation”. The blood-sprinkled mercy seat rested upon the ark which contained the unbroken tables of the Law the pot of manna and Aaron’s rod (Heb. 9:4). “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4). He also is “the bread of God”. “I am the bread of life” (John 6:33,35). The rod that budded speaks of a living priesthood – “Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). So a fulfilled law, manna from heaven, and an ever-living High Priest are vitally connected with the thought of the propitiatory and the propitiation of Heb. 2:17.

Reconciliation is one of the effects or fruits of propitiation. Reconciliation is between God and man; propitiation is solely Godward. Propitiation satisfied all the requirements of God’s justice, His righteous wrath toward sin; reconciliation brings peace which the sacrifice of Christ procured. Christ did not die only as a sinless, holy, innocent victim; he took our sins, our guilt, our condemnation and our death. He was truly “made like unto his brethren”.

Thus He became “a merciful and faithful High Priest”. He was “faithful to God” in implicit obedience, in His awful agonizing sufferings, in actual death on the cross in which He subdued all His enemies, even the Devil. He is also “merciful”, “able to succor them that are tempted”. The High Priests under the Old Covenant were not always faithful to God and merciful to man. See Jer. 1:18; Hos. 5:1-6; Zeph. 3:4; Mal. Ch. 2.

Because of this One who is “a merciful and faithful High Priest”, “God is able to make all grace abound” (2 Cor. 9:8). This One was perfect in suffering, in sorrow, in death. He hath a sufficiency of tenderness, mercy, and compassion. He hath a sufficiency of care, wisdom, and faithfulness to observe and know the seasons wherein succor is necessary. He hath a sufficiency of power to afford succor that shall be effectual. He hath a sufficiency of acceptance at the throne of grace to prevail with God for suitable supplies and succor

“In every pang that rends the heart The Man of Sorrows has a part; and still remembers in the skies His tears and agonies and cries”.

LESSON # 4 - BETTER THAN MOSES

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 3:1-19

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen Christ in His superiority to angels as The Son of God (Ch. 1), and as The Son of Man (Ch. 2); we are now to see Him as superior to the great leader and law-giver of Israel – Moses (See John 1:17; Matt. 5:17; 2 Cor. 3:13-15).

2. It would be difficult for a Jew to contemplate one greater than Moses. No rival had ever risen to challenge his supremacy, whether that be Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, or the Maccabees. None of these could overshadow the greatness of Moses, nor dim the luster of his name.

3.

The Jews regarded Moses as being the first and greatest prophet. Rabbi ben Chalafta, in the second century, echoed this attitude when in commenting on Numbers 12:7 said: “God calls Moses faithful in all his house, and thereby he ranked higher than the ministering angels themselves”.

3. The history of Moses was remarkable from beginning to end. The hand of providence preserved him as a babe, and the hand of providence dug his grave at the end. Between these termini he passed through the strangest and most contrastive vicissitudes which any mortal has ever experienced. We note: His remarkable infancy and childhood (Exod. 2:1-10; Heb. 11:23: His self-sacrificing renunciation (Heb. 11:24-26): His commission from God and his execution of it (Exod. Chs. 3-40 – The Plagues of Egypt, The Red Sea crossing, The Wilderness experience, The tabernacle and its ritual); His devotion to Israel under adverse circumstances (Exod. 32:32 – “blot me out of thy book”): His honored privileges (Exod. 31:18 – tables of stone, written with the finger of God”): His miracle working power in Egypt, and his faithful leadership in The Wilderness. It is indeed difficult to find in the records either of profane or sacred history, an individual whose character is so well fitted at once to excite attachment and command veneration, and whose history is so replete with interest and instruction.

Yet great as was Moses, the Holy Spirit through Paul now calls upon us to consider One who so far excelled him as the heavens are higher than the earth.

4. The outstanding theocratic privileges of God’s people Israel were three in number: 1. They were custodians of the Law – the oracles of God (Rom. 3:1-2); 2. They possessed the Land of Canaan (Josh. 1:2); 3. They were given a tabernacle with a Levitical priesthood, by means of which they had access to God through a divinely chosen representative (Exod. 28:1; 25:8; Lev. Chs. 1-7). The Law was given by Moses; the land was conquered by Joshua; and the priesthood was invested in Aaron.

5. An important distinction. In this calling and sphere of Hebrews, Christ is seen as associated at the right hand of God with the office of High Priest. In the calling and sphere of Ephesians and Colossians His office at the right hand of God is that of Head. Are these but two names for the same office, or are they different? It is a remarkable fact that in none other of Paul’s thirteen Epistles does he use the words: “High Priest, Priest, Priesthood, or Priest’s Office. It is only in this letter written to the Hebrews that we find these words: “Priest” thirteen times, “High Priest” seventeen times, and “Great (megan) Priest” once (Heb. 10:21). As we shall see the very heart of this book is taken up with the matter of priesthood.

Mr. C.H. Welch says: “Words are counters, they are index fingers; their inclusion or exclusion from any reasonable piece of writing indicates its general trend. Any treatise, letter or book dealing with such matters as war, finance, religion or logic would of necessity include certain specific terms and exclude others, and if the treatise, letter or book were of the length of either Hebrews or Ephesians, the subject matter of the title could be deduced from a collation of the distinctive words employed. If the theme of Hebrews necessitated the constant use of the words “Priest” and “High Priest” that fact would go a long way to indicate the character of its teaching. If to this it is added that Ephesians contains neither of these words, that additional fact would go a long way to indicate that the essential theme of Ephesians differed from Hebrews”.

I. THE EXPOSITION (1-6)

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling”. “Wherefore” indicates that the author is now drawing a conclusion from the previous argument. He has just shown that Christ is greater than angels. Angels and Moses are never far apart. It was the Law that came “by angels in the hands of a mediator” (Moses) Gal. 3:19. He addresses them as “holy brethren”. So he is definitely writing to believers – saints who like the Israelites of old had been saved through the Passover Lamb, but were in the Wilderness rejecting the perfection, the rest that comes in Canaan.

They were also “partakers of the heavenly calling”. The word translated “heavenly” is epouranios and occurs six times in Hebrews (3:1; 6:4; 8:5; 9:23; 11:16; 12:22). The word occurs five times in Ephesians, but always as “en tois epouranios” – “in the heavenlies”. The difference is that in Hebrews it is a “heavenly calling” on earth; while in Ephesians it is a calling “in the heavenlies”. Here in Hebrews there is a distinction to be made between The Old Covenant connected with the earthly calling of the then existing Jerusalem, and the “heavenly calling” of the “New Jerusalem” (12:22), which is founded on The New Covenant.

1. Christ and Moses Compared (1-2)

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (confession), Christ Jesus”.

The word translated “consider” is katanoeo. It means to attentively regard, observe as to see the significance of this One, Jesus Christ, as the “Apostle and High Priest”.

“THE APOSTLE” – apostolos. This noun comes from the Greek word apostello – “to send away from; to dispatch upon a certain mission implying authority on the part of the sender”. The first occurrence of “apostle” is in Matt. 10:2 – “the twelve apostles”. In verse five it says “These twelve Jesus sent forth” – apostello. Apostello occurs once at Heb. 1:14. Jesus often told his contemporaries that God sent Him – see Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 10:16; John 5:36-38. Jesus likewise sent His apostles – Matt. 10:16; Mk. 6:7; Luke 22:35; John 20:21.

“HIGH PRIEST” – archiereus. A priest (hiereus) is a servant of God (Deut. 17:12). They undertake the offering of sacrifices, representing man in his relation to God. What the priests were the whole nation of Israel are, and will function as such in the future (Exod. 19:3-6; Rev. 1:6; 20:6). There was priesthood among the nation before God instituted it in Israel. Melchisedec was a “King – Priest” at the time of Abraham (Gen. 14:18-20); priests in Egypt in the time of Joseph (Gen. 46:20); and in Midian in the days of Moses (Exod. 2:16). In the beginning every man was his own priest (Cain and Abel, Gen. Ch. 4). The father of the family acted as priest (Exod. Ch. 12). It was at Sinai that God gave a fixed priesthood in Aaron and the Levites (Exod. 28:1-2; Lev. Ch. 8; Num. Ch. 3). In the N.T., the word “priest” and “High Priest” occurs some 100 times in the Gospels, and 30 times in Acts. In the Epistles the words are never used until we come to Hebrews where there are some 30 references. It is also used 2 times in First Peter, and 3 times in Revelation.

So as “The Apostle” Christ is the perfect revelation of God to man; and as “High Priest” He is the perfect representative of man to God.

It seems that God originally intended that Moses should combine both of the offices of Apostle and High Priest; but he talked himself out of both (See Exod. 4:10-17).

MOSES AS A TYPE OF CHRIST:

1. Both escaped death in their infancy.
2. Both had silent years of training.
3. Both were willing to leave their high places in order to stoop down and bring liberty to a people in bondage.
4. Both were individuals of meekness.
5. Both were known for faithfulness.
6. Both were mediators who stood between God’s wrath and a sinful people. They were willing to bear the wrath themselves. Moses wanted God to blot his name out of the Book of Life.
7. Both had personal communion with God, speaking to God face to face.

a. Both Were Faithful

The word for “faithful” is pistos and means “trustworthy, worthy of confidence”. It occurs five times in Hebrews (2:17; 3:2,5; 10:23; 11:11). “Christ Jesus, who was faithful, ... as also Moses was faithful”. “My servant Moses ... who is faithful in all mine house” (Num. 12:7).

This is a general designation of inherent character. It can be said of Moses, as of Christ, that he never faltered or failed from inherent character. Moses smote the rock when he should have spoken to it (Num. 20:10-12), but this is not a sin against his inherent faithfulness. He did it in his wrath against the murmuring of the people, and did suffer the consequences.

Both were faithful in their respective houses. The Mosaic “house” was the house of the Old Covenant; the “house” of Christ was the New Covenant. Spiritual Israel is called “a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5). Whether it be to lead the people, discipline the people, or provide for the people, Moses was faithful. So Christ made all provision for His people. Of Him it could be said: “He shall not fail” (Isa. 42:4) and “to preach good tidings unto the meek; ... to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19).

In matters social, civil, political, and religious Moses like Christ made full provision.

“Moses in all his house ... Christ over His own house”. The word “house” occurs seven times in these six verses. Moses discharged all his duties over his house, the “Church in the Wilderness” (Acts 7:38); so Christ is faithful over His church, “bringing many sons to glory” (Heb. 2:10).

If we turn to 2 Cor. 3:6-11 we have the Apostle’s commentary on the Old Covenant house of Moses, and the New Covenant house of Christ:

OLD COVENANT – MOSES

Letter killeth
Glory done away
Condemnation – glory
No glory in this respect
That done away is glorious

We are changed from glory
The face of Moses (3:13)
Veiled (3:13-14)

NEW COVENANT – CHRIST

Spirit giveth life
Rather glorious
Righteousness – exceed in glory
By reason of the glory that excelleth
Much more that which remaineth is
Glorious
To glory
The face of Jesus Christ (4:6)
Unveiled (3:18)

b. Both Were Appointed

“To Him that appointed Him” (Christ) 3:2. “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” Ex. 3:10. “This same Moses ... the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush” (Acts 7:35). See also Deut. 18:18; 34:10.

“This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

Both Moses and Christ by God’s appointment were given a ministry to perform. Our Lord could say at the end of His earthly career: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world” (John 18:37).

2. Christ And Moses Contrasted (3-6)

In these verses we see the superiority, the pre-eminence of Christ over Moses. One verse for the comparison, four verses for the contrast. He shows now the vast difference between the Mediator of the Old Covenant and that of the New Covenant.

a. Christ is the Builder of the House (3-4)

“He who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. ... He that built all things is God” see Zech. 6:12-13.

Jesus Christ as both the architect and builder of the house is called “God”. Moses was merely a member of his house, the house that Christ also built because “he that built all things is God”.

It is Christ’s relationship to the house that makes Him greater than Moses. A person is always greater than his work: Shakespeare is greater than his Hamlet; Sir Christopher Wren is greater than St. Paul’s Cathedral; Rembrandt is greater than his portraits; Beethoven is greater than his music. The man expresses himself in his works, pours himself into it, yet remains apart from it. Moses at best was part of the house; Christ was the builder, and therefore transcends it. If Christ is the builder of the house, and God is the builder of all things; then it is obvious that the writer wants us to see that Jesus is God.

We note that it says: “Moses was faithful in all his house, ... Christ over his own house”. The house of Moses was of course the Old Covenant; and the house of Christ was the New Covenant.

b. Christ is the Son in His House (5-6)

“Moses was faithful as a servant; Christ as a Son”. Here we have a great contrast – “servant vrs. Son”. Moses was a servant in his house; Christ as a Son over his house.

To Moses God said: “I am that I am” (Exod. 3:14). Through Jesus He said: “I am the bread of life; the light of the world; the door; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; and, the true vine”. To Moses we have a testimony of things yet to come, yet to be spoken; in Christ things that are spoken.

Moses was a “servant” (therapon). There are many Greek words for “servant”, such as doulos, a “bond-servant”; or diakonos, “one appointed to run on errands, a minister”; huperetes, “a subordinate”. Therapon means a voluntary attendant, one who renders free service, constrained by duty or love. This word is applied in The Epistle of Barnabas; and also in Exod. 14:31 and Num. 12:7 (LXX – Greek Version). It is found nowhere else in the N.T.

Moses was but a “voluntary attendant”, Christ was a Son. It is this Son who in the beginning was presented as “heir of all things”, who “made the ages”, “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power”, “purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high” (1:2-3).

“We can never be right at circumference until we are right at center; and we can never be right at center until “Christ is all in all” (Col. 3:11) – John C. Page.

The proofs of Christ’s superiority over Moses are seven in number: (1) Moses was an apostle, Christ The “Apostle”; (2) Moses was a member of an “house”, Christ was the builder of a “house”; (3) Moses was connected with a single “house”, Christ was the builder of “all things”; (4) Moses was a mere man, Christ was God; (5) Moses was but a “servant”, Christ, the “Son”; (6) Moses was a testimony of those things to be spoken after, Christ supplied the substance and fulfillment of what Moses witnessed unto; (7) Moses never entered into the fullness of God’s purpose – the Land of Canaan, Christ is Himself the fullness of God’s purpose (Col. 2:9).

This section then closes with the words of admonition: “whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”. This is not initial salvation; but a pressing on to perfection. This is now the transition to the lesson of the wilderness life of Israel.

So the Apostle takes leave of Moses, and writes his epitaph: “Moses, a faithful servant of the Lord in his whole house”.

II. THE EXHORTATION (7-19) See also Ps. 95:7-11; Num. Ch. 14; Deut. 9:7

A – 1. Historical Revelation (7-11)

B – 1. Practical Admonition (12-14)

A – 2. Historical Revelation (15-18)

B – 2 Practical Admonition (19)

Historical Setting: Eminent and honored though Moses had been, the generation of Hebrews whom he led out of Egypt became unbelieving and disobedient, and were in consequence overtaken by a dreadful doom. The apostle now introduces words borrowed from the Psalmist (Ps. 95:7-11). They had as a people been highly privileged (“saw my works forty years” vr. 9). As a result of the ten plagues in Egypt they had seen God part the Red Sea, and they marched through on dry land; they had seen the waters come together again, and all the Egyptians including Pharaoh drowned; they had eaten of the heavenly manna; they had drunk water out of a smitten rock; they had seen the overthrow of the mighty Amalek; they experienced no wear on their garments and shoes; they were led by day in the cloud and by night in the pillar of fire. So we have here a page from the nation’s history which shows how lamentably this first generation of Israelites, under Moses, failed. We also have a solemn warning and admonition lest these N.T. Hebrews follow their evil example.

Warning and Exhortation: The constant interweaving of warning and exhortation with argument is characteristic of the Epistle. These passages (2:1-4; 3:7-19; 4:1-14; 6:1-9; 10:19-39) cannot be called digressions because they belong to the object of the writer. This object was to check a relapse from the Gospel of the New Covenant and its blessings to the legalism of the Old Covenant. The purpose that God has in mind, whether it be with Israel in the Wilderness, or with the Hebrews in the Pentecostal Era, or with the Church which is His Body, is to bring them into the perfection of His rest. This perfection of rest cannot come but by faith; faith that implicitly accepts the Word of God concerning the way of rest.

Three Persons of the Godhead: We have already seen that God the Father spake in times past; that God the Son is speaking “in these last days” (1:1-2). We are now to see that the Holy Spirit is also speaking (3:7). The Holy Spirit now is associated with what happened to Israel

during the forty years in the Wilderness. They tempted God (Exod. 17:7); they provoked Him (Num. 14:11); they grieved Him (Ps. 78:40); the ultimate result of their rebellion was that they “limited the Holy One of Israel” (Ps. 78:41). They forfeited the land into which God would have led them (Heb. 3:11) and perished in the solitudes of the desert (Vr. 17).

The Pentecostal Believers who are now addressed in our passage, find themselves in the same predicament as their ancestors in the Wilderness. First the Lord had come, called His twelve apostles and other seventy disciples to bring the nation to repentance in favor of the Kingdom blessings, but they refused them (See Matt. 11:1,20-24). Then the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost and empowered the apostles and prophets, including Paul. They came with the message of the Gospel of the New Covenant, but were met by unbelief and murmuring again as those at Meribah and Massah (Exod. 17:7). Psalm 95:8 reads: “as at Meribah” and “the day of Massah”. Meribah signifies – “provocation”, “chafing or chiding” (Num. 20:13). Massah means “temptation” or “trial”.

Caleb and Joshua had urged upon the people a confident faith in the Lord with respect to the entry into and possession of the Land of Promise (Num. 13:30). But alas, “all the congregation bade stone them with stones. ... And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me” (Num. 14:10-11)? This provoking was due to murmuring (Num. 14:2) which led to unbelief (Num. 14:2-4). Then the Lord laments and says: “how long will it be ere they believe me” (Num. 14:11)? Murmuring may seem a small thing, but it is the seed of unbelief that departs from the living God. (See 1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14). Then the Lord threatened to disinherit them, but after the prayer of Moses they were pardoned. They that provoked the Lord were pardoned, but still continued in unbelief. “But as truly as I live, ... Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it” (Num. 14:21-23; Ps. 95:8). In Numbers 14:22 the Lord declares that this people “have tempted me now these ten times”. The Companion Bible lists the “ten times” that Israel had tempted God: (1) At the Red Sea (Exod. 14:11-12); (2) At Marah (Exod. 15:23-24); (3) Wilderness of Sin (Exod. 16:2); (4) Manna (Exod. 16:20); (5) Manna (Exod. 16:27); (6) At Rephidim (Exod. 17:1-3); (7) At Horeb – Golden Calf (Exod. Ch. 32); (8) At Taberah (Num. 11:1); (9) At Kibroth-hattaavah (Num. 11:4,35); (10) At Kadesh (Num. 14:2).

The Perfection of Rest. Rest is a condition of the heart. It is repose of the spirit in God, reserved for those who like Caleb and Joshua “hath followed me fully” (Num. 14:24; 32:11-12). George Herbert poetically imagines God pouring His rich bounties upon His creature, man, out of “a glass of blessings”, until only one is left :

“When almost all was out, God made a stay, perceiving that alone of all, His treasure rest in the bottom lay. For if I should (said he) bestow this jewel also on my creature, He would adore my gifts instead of me, and rest in nature, not the God of nature, so both should losers be. Yet let him keep the rest, but keep them with repining restlessness: Let him be rich and weary, that at least, If goodness lead him not, yet weariness may toss him to my breast.

This is the way the poet tells us that rest is found, not in God’s bounties, but in God Himself. God has been calling men to rest, rest in a perfect state, a life of full communion with Him. He called in the days of Moses and Joshua, in David and the prophets, in the days of His Son and the apostles, in the days of Paul. Here is the plaintive cry of Jeremiah: “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (6:16). Then hear the words of the Lord Jesus: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28-29).

A. THE HISTORICAL REVELATION (7-11)

Paul quotes these verses from Ps. 95:7-11, and the Psalmist takes his record from Numbers Chs. 13-14. The fourth Book of the Psalms (Psalms 90-106) are the Numbers Book. It is in this section that Psalm 95 is found.

“Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith” – The Divine Author of this Psalm is then the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21). We are taught here that the Holy Spirit is God: for “God spake by the mouth of David” (Acts 4:25). The H.S. is also a person: “He saith”. An influence, a mere abstraction, cannot speak. He is the author of the O.T. They are of Divine inspiration and authority.

The great example in this section is “the provocation”. The word translated “provocation” is the word parapikrasmos (from para, amiss, used intensively, and pikraino, to make bitter). It is used only here and in verse 15 in the N.T. It is also found in the LXX in Ps. 95:8 from which this is quoted. The verb form is found in verse 16 translated “provoke”. The Hebrew word is Meribah.

This provoking of the Lord was due to their unbelief, for in Num. 14:11 it says: “How long will it be ere they believe me”?

In Numbers 14:22 the Lord declared that they had already tempted Him some ten times. We have already seen the ten compiled by the Companion Bible. The very sending of spies into the Land of Promise was an act of provocation. “We will send men before us” (Deut. 1:22). Ezek. 20:6 tells us that the Lord had already spied out the land for them.

Dr. Lightfoot tells us: “The nation of the Jews delighted mightily in the number Ten, both in sacred and civil matters. A synagogue consisted not but of ten men at least, and the number of those who comforted the mourners after the burial of the dead consisted of ten at the least. For further references to the number ten see the following Scriptures: Gen. 18:32; 31:7; Lev. 26:26; 1 Sam. 1:8; 17:17-18; Job 19:3; Dan. 1:12,14,15; Amos 6:9; Zech. 8:23. It is interesting to note that as Israel had tempted God ten times, so it was the ten spies who brought back an evil report of unbelief.

B. THE PRACTICAL ADMONITION (12-14)

There is now a solemn warning for these Hebrews against UNBELIEF – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. In the foregoing example we note three things said about the Israelites of old: (1) “They do always err in their heart”; (2) “They have not known my ways”; (3) “They shall not enter into my rest” (10-11).

Here is a “departing from the living God”. If we do not have faith in the words of the living God, we will put our trust in something else that is dead – men who die, things that perish, gods that cannot hear, see, touch, smell, or speak.

If we cut the stream from the fountain, it dries up; if we hew the branch from the tree, it withers and dies; if we detach the planet from the sun, it rushes into darkness and ruin; if we depart from the living God we cannot enter into that perfect rest.

1. Principles of Apostasy – “departing from the living God”.

God is a living God. He is not a mere historical God, a God that has been and is no more, or a God that we finally can do without. Neither is He a theoretical God, a being made up of abstract propositions which we call theologies. He is not a dormant God, impassive, sluggish, inactive. But He is a living, always everywhere present God.

This departure is not local, for there is no local place to which we can flee – “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence”? (Ps. 139:7-12). It is not theological. One may retain the creed and still be falling away. It is not ecclesiastical. Membership and activity in the local church may be retained, even while one is departing from

God. Apostasy may exist in the heart long before manifested in action. It is spiritual. “They do always err in their heart” (Vr. 10). It is failure to heed God’s Word, a disbelieving heart.

a. A Heedlessness

“Today if ye will hear his voice, ... They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways” (Vrs. 7,10). “Your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years” (Vr. 9). “He brought them out ... that He might bring them in” (Deut. 6:23).

Out of sore bondage, He brought them that they might be God’s free men; out of deep humiliation, that they might walk on high places; out of grinding poverty, that they might possess the land – “flowing with milk and honey”; out of weariness without respite that they might enter the rest of God.

“They have not known my ways” (Vr. 10). “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Men” (Ps. 103:7).

The acts were evident. They saw His wonders in Egypt and at the Red Sea; they witness His goodness in the giving of manna, and the water out of the rock; they saw His power over Amalek; they saw Mt. Sinai all ablaze with God’s presence. But they failed to see the direction in which all these pointed. They lacked the synthetic sense, could not put two and two together, saw no certain pattern. But Moses the man of the mountains saw the way, the pattern. (See Exod. 33:12-14; Deut. 8:2-3; 32:10; Ps. 10)

b. A Hardness

“Harden not your hearts, ... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (8,13).

The same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay. God is a God of love but He is also a God of justice and judgment. To be perpetually under God’s miracles and messages, and then be heedless about them can only bring hardness of heart.

In England there is what is known as “The Dropping Well”. Water runs through limestone rock, and becomes impregnated with minute particles of limestone. As they drop they encrust and petrify whatever they fall upon. Place anything you wish under this dropping water – a book, handkerchief, bird’s nest, and it will turn them into stone. Water can be the most fluid thing to carry us on to many blessings; it can also be a means of hardening.

c. A Hopelessness

“So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest”. “And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not” (Vrs. 11,18).

The words of the Psalm: “I swear in my wrath” (95:11) reflect the intensity and depth of the Divine displeasure. The language borrowed from the history, “whose carcasses fell in the wilderness” (Num. 14:29,32) suggests the deep misery of the retribution which fell upon that entire generation.

If this were true in the days of Israel in the wilderness, and those of Paul’s day; how much more of us today if we refuse the message of rest and perfection as revealed in the secret given to Paul for us.

2. Perils of Apostasy

When the cloud is driven off the mountain’s brow, and the dew off the rock, the mountain is as great as before, and the rock as hard. But when convictions fade away, and better knowledge is rejected they leave the mountain of our responsibility much greater, and our heart

much harder. Just as iron is hardened by being heated and cooled, so man when convicted and rejects is hardened. Character tends to fixity.

a. Deceitfulness of Sin

“lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Vr. 13). Sin is a very deceitful thing (see Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:3).

It has been well said that sin is like Jael, who, when asked by Sisera for water, “she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish” (Judg. 5:25); but had the hammer and nail behind her and took his life (Judg. 4:18-21).

In the cathedral at Orvieto in Italy there is a fresco by the great Italian painter, Luca Signorelli, representing the appearance and triumphs of Antichrist. Antichrist is no dreadful monster, but a most grand and dignified figure, with just a faint suggestion of Him of Whom he is the rival. He is noble in look and form, until you look into the face and there the wickedness discloses itself. He is surrounded with groups of the same things; but with nothing that openly suggests badness. There is only worldliness and temptations until you look to the background, and there persecutions and bloodshed are to be seen.

b. Departure from God

“Departing from the living God”. “In departing” is en to apostenai. From this we get the word apostasy. It is impossible for us to remain neutral in our relation to God’s Word. We are either drawing nearer, entering in; or we are departing from Him.

This is brought about by “an evil heart of unbelief”. Is unbelief so very evil? Yes, because it makes God a liar. It is evil because we fail to enter into God’s perfection and rest. We reject all further light and liberty revealed in the Word.

c. Death Instead of Perfection

“Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness”. (Vr. 17) See also Numbers 14:26-35.

God does not in this day of grace come and strike the unbelieving Christian dead; but there are many Christians who are living dead spiritually. They have refused to enter into the fullness of God’s perfection for this day and age. The test of their situation is their relation to the Word of God. They either neglect it entirely or they go back into a past revelation of truth, which today has become obsolete and erroneous. Many believers who have refused to go on to perfection have gone back into such cults as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventism, British Israelism, and Pentecostal Movements.

3. Preventatives of Apostasy

Apostasy has its root in unbelief; its antidote in faith.

a. By Admonitions

“Harden not your hearts” (Vr. 8). “Take heed, brethren” (Vr. 12). “But exhort on another daily” (Vr. 13). We are to warn, and to be warned against all insidious attacks of unbelief. “Watch and pray”! We are to exhort and admonish one another and also ourselves as the Greek points out. And this is to be a daily exercise because our enemy is always alert to bring unbelief.

b. By Advances

“Hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Vr. 14). “For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses” (Vr. 16).

“But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the man that went to search the land, still lived” (Num. 14:38).

The only antidote to a life of unbelief and defeat, and spiritual death is to advance. Joshua and Caleb by faith entered the land because they advanced.

The Children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2). They were baptized symbolically by water and by Spirit unto Moses their leader. But where is the Red Sea? In the Wilderness. They received the Law at Mt. Sinai. But where is Mt. Sinai? In the Wilderness. Canaan was their land of perfection and rest. It was the land of corn, wine, milk, and honey. It was the land of fruitfulness and fullness.

Many today stop at Calvary and Pentecost, and never go on to Ephesians and Colossians. In the Heavens is the place of our perfection and rest. Our Savior is there today, and we must enter into His perfection and rest.

C. THE HISTORICAL REVELATION (15-18)

In the first reference to “the provocation” (Vr. 8), the writer makes a general blanket statement of unbelief among the people. Here he shows that there were some who “wholly followed the Lord” and did it “fully” (Josh. 14:8,9,14; Deut. 1:36; Num. 14:24). It was with them who sinned through unbelief that the Lord was grieved.

There are three interrogatives in verses 16,17,18. They read in the Revised Version: “For who, when they heard did provoke?” All that came out of Egypt, except Joshua and Caleb. “And with whom was He displeased forty years?” All who sinned perished. “And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest?” All unbelievers shut out of the Promised Land. The first relates to Israel’s coming out of Egypt; the second to their conduct in the wilderness; and the third to their condemnation at Kadesh-barnea.

D. THE PRACTICAL ADMONITION (19)

“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief”. Unbelief is the supreme sin. It is violently deceptive. Deceit induces a person to believe that what is false is true. Unbelief and faith cannot rest side by side. Unbelief turns all its victims into carcasses in the wilderness; faith is a conquering Joshua going over Jordan into God’s Promised Land.

LESSON # 5 - BETTER THAN JOSHUA

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 4:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

1. The closing words of chapter three: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” form the connecting link between what has been before and that which is about to come.

From our study of chapter three a question might arise, namely: Seeing that practically all the adults who came out of Egypt by Moses perished in the wilderness, did not the promise of God to bring them into Canaan fail of their accomplishment? (See Exod. 6:6-8) The answer to this question is seen in the following – God made an unconditional covenant of grace with Abraham (Gen. 15:5-6, 18-21). Abraham put implicit faith in God’s Word (Heb. 11:8,17). It was upon the bases of this covenant that God made promise to Moses in Exod. 6:6-8. But Israel no more than got into the wilderness on their journey to Canaan before she murmured against Moses and God, and sinned the sin of unbelief (See Exod. 16:2; 17:1-2). Then God gave them the Covenant of works by Moses, which was a conditional covenant (Exod. 19:3-9). It was now by this Conditional Covenant of the Law that they came to the borders of Canaan under Moses and failed to enter in. It was on the basis of this covenant that they entered Canaan under Joshua and did not come to perfect “rest”. It was under this Covenant that King David conquered most of the land, but did not give them perfect peace and rest (See Hebr. 3:7-11; 4:8; 4:7). The reason for all this failure to attain perfect rest in the Land of Canaan was because “the Law made nothing perfect” (Heb. 7:19). But now Paul comes and offers these Hebrews “rest” under the New Covenant of Grace made with Jesus Christ, a better Mediator, Leader, Apostle than Moses, Joshua, and David. These N.T. Hebrews failed as did their forefathers in O.T. times. However, the Abrahamic Covenant will bring a future Hebrew nation into Millennial rest under the New Covenant. This is what Heb. 4:9 says: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God”. Sovereign grace intervenes only after the responsibility of man has been tested and his failure and unworthiness manifested. (See Deut. 31:24-29). For the millennial rest see Isa. 11:11-16; Jer. 31:31-40.

2. The main subject of this section is the one suggested in the latter part of chapter three, namely, “rest”. This word “rest” occurs twelve times in chapters three and four. It is the translation of three Greek words: katapausis, katapauo, and sabbatizmos. The number 12 is so definitely connected with Israel, so this “rest” is for the people whom God chose in Abraham. This chapter sets forth three different rests: (1) Rest of Creation; (2) Rest of Canaan; (3) Rest in Christ. Rest is seen as the work of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (1) The sabbath of the Father when He ended His work in Creation; (2) The sabbath of the Son when He ended His work on the Cross; and (3) The sabbath of the Holy Spirit when He ends His work in the hearts of the Hebrews in the Millennium (See Gen. 2:2-3; John 19:30; Ezek. 37:14).

3. The Pentecostal Period is an antitype of the wilderness experience, which in turn is a type of this Pentecostal Period. As Israel wandered forty years without rest in the wilderness, so now these Hebrews are about to wander another forty years and find no rest which the Holy Spirit gives in Christ.

I. THE DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION (1-10)

1. As Seen In The Promise of Rest (1,4,5,8-10)

“Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest”.

a. The Rest of Reconstruction (4) Gen. 2:1-3.

This represents the completed work of the Father in Creation. The sabbath rest or stop (stop or cease is better here than “rest” because God was not tired after His work, but simply ceased to work) of God symbolized a finished creation. On the day that God stopped His work, He could say, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished”. Creation as it came forth from God’s hand was perfect. There was not a disjointed principle, nor a discordant note.

Man can add nothing intrinsically to creation. He can take God’s perfect creation and work with it to bring out latent beauty and richness; but it was all there in embryo, in essence. Even today, after sin has blighted the fairest scenes, and poisoned the sweetest springs of life, we cannot fail to see and be impressed by the exquisite adaptations of the Creator for our physical and material welfare. It was a perfect creation.

The progress of the creation is an instructive parable of God’s method in the new creation: From chaos and darkness to light, then life, then growth, then fruit, and then rest. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor. 4:6).

The same power which was behind the first command is behind the second. The difference is this that there was no resistance to God’s will in the first creation; there is in the hearts of men for the new creation. The physical creation was merely material and mechanical; the spiritual deals with moral creatures who can either exercise faith or unbelief.

b. The Rest of Restoration (5-8)

“For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day” (Vr. 8).

Joshua did not lead them into perfect rest. Many failed to even enter the Promised Land. Those who did enter never fully conquered their enemies, and so never enjoyed perfect peace and rest.

Numbers chapter 13 gave the sorrowful account of their failure to enter Canaan rest. Even the spies, except two, doubted God’s power. There were the “nevertheless”, “moreover”, and “but” in their account of what they saw. There were great cities, high walls, tall giants; but they failed to see their God of great power. Unbelief gripped most of them; but faith reckons on God and says: “We are well able to overcome”.

Even in David’s day (Vr. 7) they had not entered into that rest (Ps. 95:7-11). David, the king of war, made greater peace for his people than anyone else.

c. The Rest of Reconciliation (Vr. 2) (Heb. 2:17)

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them”. Christ had invited His people to rest (Matt. 11:28-30). It is Christ who makes possible the reconciliation of the New Covenant. He is the true Joshua (Jesus) who can lead His people to perfect rest.

2. As Seen In The Peril of Resistance (1-3, 6-7)

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Vr. 1). “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Vr. 7).

Running through this entire section is the repeated note of warning lest the Hebrew Christians “come short” and “harden” their hearts. The author shows that the peril lay in the fact that they were not uniting faith to the glad tidings announced to them, (Vr. 2). These glad tidings were to be found in Christ administered by the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant. The result of this unbelief and resistance is the hardened heart.

When faith is lacking then one doubts both the love of God and the truthfulness of His Word.

II. THE PRACTICAL EXHORTATION (11-13)

“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Vr. 11).

“Let us labor” is spoudasomen (“We should be diligent”). This word is used in Eph. 4:3 – “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. This has nothing to do with working to be saved, but a pressing on to be perfect, complete in Him.

Paul expressed this same truth in Col. 1:29 – “Wherefore I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily”. Working and striving with His working within me which makes for true diligence. Paul also expresses the same truth in Phil. 2:12, “... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”.

It was the Word of God spoken orally through Moses in the wilderness that condemned the Israelites; and it is now the word of God spoken by Paul that will condemn the N.T. Hebrews (See Acts 28:25-28). What Luther said of Paul’s writings is true of all Scripture: “its words are not dead words; they are living creatures, and have hands and feet”.

1. The Dynamic Word Condemns

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword”.

The “word of God is quick” – it is living and vital. “Liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet. 1:23). It is also “powerful” or efficient, in its converting power (Ps. 19:7; 1 Pet. 1:23); its correction of faults (2 Tim. 3:16); its consolation of the mourner (1 Thess. 4:18; Rom. 15:4; Ps. 119:50); in its consecration of the believer (John 17:17).

The word of God is the supreme power among men. In the moral sphere it dominates the thought of the world; it blesses the one who accepts it, and condemns the one who rejects it. To the individual soul it is like “a fire and a hammer”. It is a “two-edged sword” because it both hurts as a sword, and it heals as a surgeon’s knife.

2. The Dissecting Word Condemns

“piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow”.

It is heart-dissecting. The word pierces into the deepest recesses of man’s being. It pricks men in their hearts. It parts soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It parts the animal soul from the divine spirit in human nature. It gives sensibility and power to the heavenward side of our being, and enables us to distinguish what in us belongs to the earthward side. It divides

asunder the fear and unbelief of our soulical nature from the faith and trust of our spirit nature. It marks off the believer's "works of the flesh" from "the fruit of the spirit" (Gal. 5:19,22).

The soul has to do with the physical senses. The nation of Israel in the wilderness lived a soulish life. They sighed for the flesh pots of Egypt, murmured against God's food and drink and also against God's servants, Moses and Aaron. They were sensual. In the days of Christ many responded to the loaves and fishes, but could not digest His words. So also now in these Pentecostal days the Hebrews were sighing for the physical blessings of the kingdom. First and foremost they must learn that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Then they that "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The kingdom would provide physical blessings for those who pressed on to perfection and rest. The word of God alone is able to judge between any action which is soulical or spiritual.

3. The Discerning Word Condemns

"and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do".

The word of God not only divides between soul and spirit, but is also a detector of human character – the intents and thoughts of man. It detects the true spiritual condition of every man. It will be the word of God which condemns men in the day of judgment.

"Eye of God's Word! Where'er we turn, Ever upon us! Thy keen gaze can all the depths of sin discern, unravel ever bosom's maze. Who that has felt thy glance of dread thrill through his heart's remotest cells, about his path, about his bed, can doubt what spirit in thee dwells" – Keble.

CONCLUSION:

1. Faith is the covering experience – "For we which have believed do enter into rest" (Vr. 3). Faith is the beginning, the continuation, and the end of all entrance into God's rest. Every step must be a step of faith. Unbelief is always a backward movement; faith is always a forward movement. Unbelief says: "We be not able to go up", faith says: "Let us go up at once" (Num. 13:30-31). Faith brings rest from wandering. The wilderness is always an unsettled, uncertain, and unsatisfying life. There is a difference between unbelief and disbelief. Disbelief is denial, dispute, rejection of a thing as truth. Unbelief is shutting out the Gospel, the Good News from possessing and controlling life. Unbelief is the attitude of immaturity, not willing to press on to perfection and rest. Unbelief keeps a person in a state of spiritual instability – in the words of an old spiritual: "Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down; O yes Lord!"

2. "Jesus I am resting, resting in the joy of what thou art; I am finding out the greatness of thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon thee, and thy beauty fills my soul, for by thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole".

LESSON # 6 - BETTER THAN AARON

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 4:14-8:5

INTRODUCTION:

1. The author of Hebrews now presents the priesthood of Jesus Christ as the basis of the hope of his people in their Christian calling. He has already alluded to the fact of priesthood, see 1:3; 2:17-18; 3:1. He now proposes to discuss the matter at great length showing that the New Covenant ministry of Christ is superior to the Old Covenant ministry of Aaron. The two priesthoods will be set forth and their characteristics and conducts contrasted and compared.

2. One of the prominent truths taught and developed in the Apostolic Age was the truth, profound yet simple, of man's right of direct access to God through the redemptive work of Christ (See 4:16; 7:19).

3. The primitive idea of holiness as attached to Deity was that of separateness and unapproachableness. Being separate and unapproachable it became necessary for a man who wanted to approach the deity to have some skilled person to guide him, and these became known as priests. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for priest is kohen, and comes from a root meaning, "to stand", that is standing as a servant and in close relationship to him – see Gen. 18:22-23; 1 Kings 17:1 – so as to interpret His will. In the earliest history of God's dealing with Israel, sacrifice was not the exclusive right of the priest (Exod. 24:4-5; Job 1:5). This custom prevailed for generations and the head of the family or clan offered sacrifices. Later the priest offered sacrifices and he became the custodian of the sanctuary and the interpreter of the Divine will. The teaching office of the priest was later of considerable importance. The priests were the recognized teachers of the people. They spoke out of the collective wisdom of their class, while the prophet spoke out of individual experience. The great personalities in the time of crises were the prophets. The priest's business was the maintenance of established beliefs and the performance of accepted rituals rather than the development of fresh aspects of truth.

4. The Urim and Thummim appear to have been a recognized medium for finding out the Divine will. The possession and use of these were the prerogative of the priest (See Exod. 28:26-30; 1 Sam. 23:9; 30:7).

5. The N.T. writers recognize no relationship at all between the Jewish priesthood of Aaron, and the Christian ministry of Christ. The former ends with his death; the latter begins with His resurrection and continues forever.

6. Priesthood is a standing symbol of distance and alienation. In the Garden of Eden there was no priest, and we find no temple in the new creation (Rev. 21:22). In this present dispensation of grace each one has unhindered access, by one Spirit, to the Father (Heb. 4:16; Eph. 2:18). The Aaronic priesthood came about because of Moses' inability to perform all the functions of a mediator. Christ has no such disabilities. He exercises all the duties pertaining to mediatorship, and thus becomes a priest of a different order.

From the Garden of Eden when no priest is present, to Melchisedek who was both priest and king, down to Aaron there was a distinct descent. The ascent comes with Christ, Who is both Priest and King, to the final age of the ages when priesthood is no longer needed.

7. Dr. John Brown has well said: “No part of the Mosaic economy had taken a stronger hold of the imaginations and affections of the Jews than the Aaronic High-Priesthood, and that system of ritual worship over which its occupants presided. The gorgeous apparel, the solemn investiture, the mysterious sacredness of the high priest, the grandeur of the temple in which he ministered, and the imposing splendor of the religious rites which he performed, - all these operated like a charm in riveting the attachment of the Jews to the now over-dated economy, and in exciting powerful prejudices against that simple, spiritual, unostentatious system by which it had been superceded. In opposition to those prejudices, the apostle shows that the Christian economy is deficient in nothing excellent to be found in the Mosaic; on the contrary, that it had a more dignified High Priest, a more magnificent temple, a more sacred altar, a more efficacious sacrifice: and that, to the spiritually enlightened mind, all the temporary splendors of the Mosaic typical ceremonial, wax dim and disappear amid the overwhelming glories of the permanent realization of the Christian institution”.

8. Two other great names in Old Testament history are now to come before us: Aaron and Melchisedek. In demonstrating our Lord’s superiority to these, the writer first announces the fact and force of the priesthood of Christ (4:14-16); he then passes to a description of the Aaronic priests (5:1-10); then he turns to warn and appeal (5:11-6:20); and finally shows that the priesthood of Christ was after the pattern of Aaron in that it dealt with sin, and after the order of Melchisedek in that it was eternal, thus transcending the two priesthoods as heaven transcends the earth (7:1-8:5).

In Christ we have a Perfect Priest – a Savior Who offered a Perfect Sacrifice, entered a Perfect Sanctuary to perform a Perfect Service, and will return to Perfect His redemptive work.

I. CHRIST IS BETTER IN CHARACTER (4:14 – 5:10)

The High Priesthood of Christ is the main theme of this Epistle, and the writer is now coming to the very heart of it.

1. The Fact of His Better Qualities (4:14)

“We have a great High Priest”. We have seen the need of the great High Priest. The sacred writer has made us tremble before the sharp, penetrating, searching Word of God, and laid us low beneath the inescapable eyes of the Almighty. We can defend ourselves against the criticisms of our fellows. We can at least throw the stones back that they hurl at us. But the Word of God is a critic that strips us of our defensive clothing, and leaves us naked and bare in His sight.

He has “passed through the heavens”. The dignity of the ancient priest was seen when once a year he parted the veil and entered the Holy of Holies with the blood to make national atonement, and then to return with a benediction to the people. This gave him a dignity which even the king did not have; he waited upon the priest. This act was, however, only temporary and was for a few moments once a year. The Aaronic priests passed through a veil, but Christ “passed through the heavens”. Christ is today at God’s right hand, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” (Eph. 1:21).

The Jews had seven heavens; but the Scriptures speak about three. Paul was “caught up to the third heaven” or better “caught away to the third heaven”. He came there in vision. The three heavens have been designated as, the aerial heavens, the astral heavens, and the celestial heavens.

What a distance Christ came when He left His place in glory to come into this world, and become sin for us. Without making a complete reconciliation He never could have triumphed through the heavens. His procession through the heavens meant that He had triumphed over the

Devil, Death, and Hades. He stoops to conquer and after the conquest is over, He rides the chariot of ascension through the heavens to glory. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory” (Ps. 24:9-10).

This One is “Jesus the Son of God”. As to His name Jesus see 2:9 and 3:1; and as to His name “Son of God” see 1:2,5-13; 3:6.

“We should hold fast the confession”. To abandon such a High Priest for the dying priesthood of Judaism would be to place oneself beyond the possibility of expiation for sins.

It was an extremely serious thing for anyone to covet or usurp the office of the Aaronic Priesthood. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram claimed the priesthood and were swallowed up by the earth (Num. Ch. 16). The censers which they took were made into broad plates to cover the altar as a memorial that no one except of the seed of Aaron could offer incense unto the Lord (Num. 16:39-40). King Uzziah also transgressed against the Lord when he went into the temple to burn incense upon the altar of incense. For this act leprosy came upon his forehead and he was put out, a leper to the day of his death (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

2. The Force of His Better Qualities (4:15-16)

Here we have first A Gracious Redeemer – “to sympathize with our infirmities”; then also A Glorious Reception – “come therefore with boldness to the throne of grace”.

a. As Seen in The Gracious Redeemer (15)

The double negative “not” and “cannot” express a strong affirmation: “We have a High Priest Who can be touched with”. The expression “touched with” translates the word sumpatheo (Eng. Sympathy) – “to suffer with another”. In Heb. 10:34 it is rendered “compassion”. These are the only places the word is found in the N.T.

Christ was tempted in all points like as we – sin excepted. His round of temptations gives Him experiential knowledge of our conflicts; so His sympathy is not just the pity of an onlooker, but the compassion of a fellow-sufferer. The word translated “tempted” is the Greek word peiradzo. Thayer in his lexicon says of this word: (1) “to try whether a thing can be done; to attempt, endeavor”. (2) “To try, make trial of, test, for the purpose of ascertaining his quality, or what he thinks, or how he will behave himself”. Then with reference to Heb. 4:15 he says: “of God; to inflict evils upon one in order to prove his character and the steadfastness of his faith”. This verb in our text is a perfect, passive participle, which indicates fullness and completeness. This is the word that is used of Christ’s temptation by the Devil (Matt. 4:1-10).

Lest such an exalted position as Christ now has should place a distance between our exalted Priest and us. We are now assured of His understanding sympathy.

:In all things” means that sinless flesh was exposed to all the temptations of sinful flesh. Whatever else “apart from sin” may mean, it certainly means that He was left sinless, intact, unshaken, undisturbed. So He that was tempted with us, suffered with us, but without sin: He can also prevail with us and on our behalf. There is therefore a Man in glory, a High Priest Who knows our needs and can sympathize with and succor us in our temptation. There could be no real sympathy on the part of Christ until He experienced the same as the one who needs sympathy.

It is with “our infirmities” that Christ sympathizes; not with our sins. Sir Robert Anderson says: “If we yield to sin, we need not look to Him for sympathy, though a penitent confession will bring pardon full and free through His atoning work”. “Infirmities” may be defined as the sinless consequences of sin. Infirmities can be in both physical and mental

limitations. Job had sickness and suffering physically, and grief and bereavement mentally. What disturbed him most was that he felt he had no true sympathy (Job 16:1-2).

Dr. Stuart Nye Hutchinson tells of a boy who lost his right hand, and was so humiliated he wanted no one to see him. His father suggested that a certain minister come and see him, but the boy rebelled against it. Finally, the father sent for him, and when he came the boy saw that he too had lost his right hand. Then there was an immediate bond of sympathy. The minister could say: "I know how it feels".

b. As Seen in His Glorious Reception (16)

"We should come, therefore, with boldness to the throne of grace".

The place of blessing is now the "Throne of grace". We are reminded of Romans 8:1 – "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus". A throne suggests a place of power, majesty, sovereignty, and wealth; and here it is also grace.

The principle of blessing is expressed in the word "boldly" "Let us be approaching", not a once for all act, but a continual coming. The verb is in the present tense. The word "boldly" also means "speaking everything". So it is to be a continual, customary thing done with great confidence.

The promise is both "mercy" and "grace". Dr. W.H. Griffith Thomas suggests that "we need mercy because of our sin" and "we need grace because of our weakness". In both it is the love of God in active exercise on behalf of sinful men. Paul tells us that "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love", saved us by His grace (Eph. 2:4-5).

Where high the heavenly temple stands,
The house of God not made with hands,
A great High Priest our nature wears,
The Guardian of mankind appears.

He who for men their surety stood,
And poured on earth His precious blood,
Pursues in heaven His mighty plan,
The Savior and the Friend of man.

3. The Finality of His Better Qualities (5:1-10)

"He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:32-33).

Job utters these words in an experience of complete frustration. He also speaks for the whole human race. Here is a man stripped of every physical covering – family, wealth, health, position, honor, sitting in the dust, bewildered, awed, afraid. He could argue his own righteousness before man, but sensed his inability before God. "If I wash me in snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and my clothes shall abhor me" (Job 9:30-31). He could not meet God on equal terms. If only he might find one who could feel his need on the human level, and touch God on the Divine level – one who could speak as a fellow and yet touch God, as an equal, - there would be hope!

This pathetic cry of the human heart, even before Job and ever after, was heard by God in the dawn of human history. He had already made a provision and appointed a Daysman, the Arbiter, the Mediator, the Advocate, the "great High Priest", Jesus Christ, by a decree of infinite love and grace.

God did not immediately reveal His Priest. He established first the Levitical or Aaronic order of the priesthood in Israel. It was a Divine appointment by God. And it became a

sacrilege and presumption for anyone to intrude into this priestly office. Korah and his brethren presumed, and were destroyed in the presence of all the people (Num. Ch. 16). Saul presumed and lost his kingdom (1 Sam. 13:8-14). Uzziah presumed and was smitten with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-21). The northern kingdom fell partly because of the elevation of non-Levitical priests (2 Chron. 13:6-9).

We are now entering upon the longest section of this book – 5:1 – 10:39. It is the treatment of the Savior's Priesthood. Eternal truth lay hidden in the ritual of Judaism. The tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices present two complementary truths, namely: the manifestation of God to man, and the approach of man to God. It is with the latter that we are now given truth.

a. As Seen in the Aaronic Comparison (1-4)

1. His Appointment (1,4)

“For every high priest taken from among men”. Here we see the human origin of the high priest. This is marked as a ground of the fitness of his appointment. A high priest being himself a man, can act for man. An angel could not be a fitting priest to act on behalf of men, for he possesses not their nature, is not subject to their temptations, and has no experiential acquaintance with their sufferings. He can have no compassion upon them for he has no heartfelt sympathy.

“Is ordained for men in things pertaining to God”. “And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”. Here is Divine ordination. His credentials are Divine; for God Himself has appointed him. Under the Mosaic economy the Hebrews were taught that men could not directly and personally approach unto God. They were sinful; He was holy. Sinful men are “alienated from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18). At Mt. Sinai the people could not go up the mount nor even touch it (Exod. 19:12). At the tabernacle: the people were permitted only at the outward court; the priests alone could go into the Holy Place; and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year. They learned the truth of Isa. 59:2. “That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”. To “offer” is the chief function of the high priest. He offers to God for men. He offers “both gifts and sacrifices”. “Gifts” are the Eucharistic or thanksgiving offerings, and “sacrifices” are the sacrificial or propitiatory sacrifices. “Gifts” are generally the meal-offerings, the non-bloody offerings; and “sacrifices” the bloody offerings. These have special reference to the great Day of Atonement. So a priest without a sacrifice is no peace-maker between God and man.

At the cross Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to God. He was the Lamb of God, Who bore away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). He also made an offering (Heb. 8:3). He offered Himself “without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). To Israel it is said: “He giveth His life for the sheep” (John 10:11,18). To the Church, He “loved the Church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

2. His Attainment (2)

“Compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way”.

Sinful men because of their ignorance wander, a departure from the living God, His will and ways.

Aaron had compassion because he himself “is compassed with infirmity”. Every Aaronic priest was himself conscious of besetting sin; both natural and moral weakness were his experience. See Prov. 4:19; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:11.

3. His Atonement (3)

“For himself, to offer for sins”. It was necessary for Aaron to obtain purity for himself before he could offer for others (Lev. 4:1-12).

Personal fitness was an essential qualification of the priest: in the case of the Levitical, a ceremonial fitness; with Christ, a personal and inherent fitness.

b. As Seen in the Melchisedek Contrast (5-10)

The writer now proceeds to show that Christ satisfied every qualification for the office of a priest; yea, even more because He was a perfect priest.

1. His Divine Appointment (5-6,10)

“Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee” ... “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek”.

The Divine appointment of Christ is exhibited in two passages from the Psalms – Psa. 2:7; 110:4. His appointment is established as a “Son” and includes every special honor, kingly and priestly. He glorified not Himself for this office. He waited for His Father’s appointment.

If the Levitical priesthood, temporary and preparatory as it was, commanded recognition and reverence, how much more the final and enduring appointment of the Son!

So the Lord meets the demands of human needs. He can lay His hand upon me; meet me on my level. He is a Man among men. So far more perfectly than Aaron does He fulfill the basic requirement of the Levitical priesthood, namely compassion.

On the breastplate and shoulderpieces the High Priest bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Exod. 39:14).

The Lord’s compassion is far greater than that of Aaron, Eleasar, Jehoiada. His compassion was so deep that it became a veritable convulsion, an outward paroxysm, a soul anguish.

There is no place where earth’s sorrows
Are more felt than in Heaven:
There is no place where earth’s failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

Have we One who has equality with God? Can He meet God on His terms? Can He command God? Is He wholly acceptable with God? “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

2. His Divine Approval (7-8)

“Offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears”. Here we see this High Priest in His submissive prayers. All the days of His flesh our Lord was a Man of prayer, and also a Man of tears. Prayers and tears; tears and prayers.

This has reference no doubt to His experience in Gethsemane. We read: “And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). However, His life on earth were days of “pouring out”. Living was costly to Him, for it all led up to His dying. Gethsemane and Calvary were the climax of a Gethsemane and Calvary life.

“Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). This is redemptive praying, and redemptive tears, and blood.

Jesus said to His disciples in the Garden: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Some believe that our Lord here spoke of Himself, and His bodily weakness in this hour of His agony. Paul said that “he was crucified through weakness” (2 Cor. 13:4). On the way to Calvary they had to transfer the cross from Jesus to a man of Cyrene, Simon by name (Matt. 27:32). The Savior indeed was crucified through physical weakness.

As we follow Jesus the Nazarene; whose arms had held little children, whose word had healed many diseased, deaf, and dumb, whose touch had raised the dead; into the garden of Gethsemane among the old olive trees, we hear the bitter wail, the sorrowful cry, the moaning sob as the Son of Man and Son of God is given the “cup” of human iniquity to drink. Then an angel from heaven came and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43), giving Divine approval to His sacrificial praying.

“Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Vr. 8). Here is suffering obedience. The prayers and tears led on to the suffering and sustained Him in it. That was the school of obedience. This reveals His true manhood. John Calvin says of this obedience: “Not that He was driven to this by force, or that He had need of being thus exercised, as the case is with oxen or horses when their ferocity is to be tamed; for He was abundantly willing to render to His Father the obedience which He owed”. See Ps. 40:8; John 4:34. For the Son of God to learn obedience in suffering is the highest form of loyalty and obedience. It is the subjection to the will of another; it is an owning of the authority of another; it is performing the pleasure of another. This is an entirely new experience for the Son. Before His incarnation, He had Himself occupied the place of authority, of supreme authority. His seat had been the throne of the Universe. He it was who spoke and the universe came into being. From His throne in glory He had issued commands and enforced obedience. But now He takes the place of a servant, assumes human nature, becomes a Man, and is in all things, even in the hour of suffering, obedient to His Father’s will.

God did not spare His Son the suffering involved in perfect obedience, for one who is to represent us and lead us in the way of obedience must himself know the cost.

3. His Divine Atonement (9)

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him”

Here is the final validation of His priesthood. Our Lord’s prayers, tears, sufferings and obedience led to His perfecting as a Redeemer, and thus brought age-abiding redemption to men.

Here is where the great leaders of religion and philosophy failed – Zoroaster, Lao-tze, Confucius, Gautama Buddha, and Muhammed. They didn’t have what it took to bring salvation to men. Christ alone has this. In Christ the Divine in union with the human, in absolute sinlessness, infinite compassion, universal sovereignty, brings complete redemption. For Christ alone is reserved the “Pontifical Throne”. He only is Pontifex Maximus – “declared by God a High Priest after the order of Melchisedek.

His death is my plea;
My Advocate see,
And hear the blood speak that hath answered for me.
He purchased the grace
Which now I embrace;
O Father, Thou know’st He hath died in my place.

CONCLUSION:

AARON VERSES CHRIST

By Comparison: Both taken from among men (Vr. 1). Both ordained for men (Vr. 1). Both offered for sins (Vr. 1). Both compassionate on the ignorant and wayward (Vr. 2) (Matt. 9:35-38). Both called of God (Vr. 4).

By Contrast: Aaron had to offer for himself (Vr. 3); Christ without sin (4:15). Aaron, a servant of God; Christ a Son of God (5:5). Aaron, the Aaronic order passing; Christ, permanent after Melchisedek (Vr. 6). Aaron, imperfect, disobedient (Num. 20:23-29); 1 Sam. Ch. 2); Christ, perfect, obedient (Vrs. 8-9).

Christ is:

1. A Strong High Priest (4:14). He went all the way from Calvary to God’s right hand.
2. A Sympathetic High Priest (4:15; 5:2). We need not only a strong Priest, but a sympathetic One too. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; acquainted with our frailties.
3. A Sinless High Priest (4:15). See Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5.
4. A Sufficient High Priest (5:9). Perfect Redeemer – perfect redemption.
5. A Supreme High Priest. He is like Melchisedek – King-Priest.

II. THIRD INTERLUDE OF WARNING (5:11 – 6:20)

The author has just said that Christ is: “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedek” (5:10). He will also close this section with “Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek” (6:20). Then he enters into a discussion of the Melchisedek priesthood in chapter seven.

The difficulty of unfolding the truth of Christ’s High-priestly office typified in Melchisedek is due to the spiritual and intellectual state of these Hebrews. They are still in a state of immaturity when they should be fully mature. Thus the author turns to a lengthy digression which takes in 5:11 thru 6:20 before coming again to his main theme of Melchisedek. The purpose of this aside is to exhort these Hebrew believers to progress. They lacked the discernment that is a mark of spiritual maturity (5:11-14); and are therefore called upon “to go on to perfection” or more literally “let us be borne on” (the passive voice of phero, to carry).

The Apostle found it difficult to “interpret” (not “uttered”) these things to the Hebrews. The word translated “uttered” is hermeneuo – hermeneutics. The reason for this was because “they have become sluggish in hearing”. The LXX uses this word “nothros” translated “dull” in Prov. 22:29 as “mean men” (obscure men); and in Prov. 12:8 “perverse”. The Hebrew word chashok and its cognate choshhek mean “obscure” or “darkened”. It isn’t the truth that is so difficult to understand. Truth is never difficult, nor are there different grades of truth; it is our capacity to embrace the truth because of a lack of spiritual perception.

This is now the third warning given in the Epistle: (1) Neglect leads to drifting (2:1-4); (2) Hardening of heart leads to unbelief (3:7-19); and now (3) immaturity leads to apostasy (5:11-6:20).

Comparison of 1 Cor. Ch. 3 with Hebrews Chs. 5 & 6

<u>1 Cor. 2 & 3</u>	<u>Heb. 5 & 6</u>
1. Babes3:1	1. Babes5:13
2. Milk3:2	2. Milk5:13
3. Meat3:2	3. Meat5:14

4. Perfect	2:6	4. Perfect	5:14
5. Foundation	3:11	5. Foundation	6:1-2
6. Fire	3:13	6. Fire	6:8
7. 6 things erected	3:12	7. Six-fold elements	6:1-2

Thus the parallelism between the Corinthian Assembly and that of the Hebrew believers in this Epistle is very marked. The immaturity of both, though expressed in different ways, effectually prevented them from accepting and perpetuating the truth of the New Covenant.

1. The Fact of Immaturity (12-14)

“Ye ought to be teachers, ... ye have need that one teach you, ... unskillful in the word of righteousness, ... senses exercised to discern both good and evil”.

These believers have spiritual life for the writer calls them “holy brethren” (3:1,12). He commends their work and love. They have capacity for growth, and they can walk for they are exhorted to go on.

a. In Their Lack of Progress (12)

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles.

Teachers are placed with those who can take solid food, have the senses exercised and are thus perfect. The qualification for teaching is something more than mere head knowledge and ready speech.

In the Sermon on the Mount, breaking the commandments and doing them are associated with teaching men so (Matt. 5:19).

“teach you the first principles of the oracles of God” (ta stoicheia tes arches – “the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God”). Stoicheia are the initial steps of knowledge, and also the “elements” of the natural world (Gal. 4:3; 4:9; Col. 2:8,20; 2 Pet. 3:10-12). (The verb “stoicheo” comes in Acts 21:24 – “walkest orderly” – also in Rom. 4:12; Gal. 5:25; 6:16; Phil. 3:16).

These Hebrew believers had progressed no further than the initial steps of the faith, and needed teaching in these elements again. The doctrine and faith of the early church were rightly called “the way”, for they were walk as well as word, life as well as lip. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord” (Hos. 6:3).

b. In Their Lack of Experience (12b-13)

“... have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

A babe is without experience. A baby is a most delightful child, a most fascinating bundle of life. All their baby ways are wonderful – smiling, cooing, kicking, - working so hard to grow, determined to become a man or woman in a day. One day mother says: “I just hate to see him or her grow up; losing their baby ways so fast”! This is a bit of sentimental fallacy. Suppose baby would not grow by inches and pounds every month, one would then spend the last penny on medical care to coax normal growth.

So it is in the spiritual realm. A newborn babe in Christ is a delight, but protracted babyhood, or a return to spiritual babyhood as in the case of these Hebrews, is an unmitigated sorrow.

Foods are here set forth for doctrines. Paul uses the same figure with the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:1-2). To them it was “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (2:2). Then he adds: “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (2:6). A milk diet is natural and right for infants, but it has a purpose and a limit. Peter speaks of this in 1 Pet. 2:2-3. He also urges them to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

c. In their lack of discernment (14)

“...senses exercised to discern both good and evil”.

This exercise of the perceptions enables the perfect to discriminate between good and evil. There is need for discernment, discrimination, of right division, of trying the things that differ. These Hebrews were not able to discern the difference between the word of beginning and the word of perfection. The mature should have their faculties trained and disciplined, so as to distinguish between true and false, superior and inferior.

The spiritually immature are always hankering after religious things; the mature find their all in Christ. The Apostle is about to take from these Hebrews the Old Covenant economy. Melchisedek stands for something and someone removed from Moses and Aaron.

2. The Force of Immaturity (6:1-3)

It is well to keep in mind the setting of this book. It is the wilderness experience of Israel. It is the eisodus experience, not the exodus from Egypt. These Hebrews believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah; and, that though crucified He was living and was about to return to Jerusalem to restore the throne of David and introduce the millennial kingdom. They were at the same time zealous observers of the law (Acts 21:20). These Hebrews were saved. But they were failing to enter the promised land of the New Covenant. They came through the early stages of faith, but were not pressing on to perfection.

The forms and symbols in which these Hebrews were trusting were of Divine origin, but they had served their purpose. They are now urged to go from the infancy of all their O.T. ordinances, the ministry of John the Baptist, and the pre-pentecostal ministry of the twelve apostles, unto full manhood in Jesus Christ. These “principles of the doctrine of Christ” or better “the beginning of the word of Christ” are to be left behind; not only to leave them but also to press on. “HAVING LEFT”, “GO ON”, “NOT LAYING AGAIN”.

Nothing is a greater hindrance to growth and perfection in the Christian life than attachment to a traditional religion consisting in ordinances. It sets up a barrier between the soul and God.

Six foundational truths are now mentioned in these verses, and they are paired:

Repentance and Faith

Baptisms and Lay on of Hands

Resurrection and Judgment

In Ephesians 4:4-6 we have the seven-fold foundation for the Church, the Body of Christ.

a. As Seen in “repentance from dead works”.

Repentance is a foundation truth. The word “repentance” is from the word metanoia. It occurs once again in Hebrews 12:17 in connection with Esau. The marginal reading says: “way to change his mind”. The word means, “afterthought” or “change of mind”. In 1

Thess. 1:9 it is suggested in the words: “How ye turned to God from idols”. The turning from idols and repentance from dead works, alike were marks turning from idols and repentance from dead works, alike were marks of a great and vital change.

There are three kinds of works: Evil works, which the sinful man performs; Good works, which those in Christ alone can perform; and Dead works which are performed by religionists. It is from the latter that he is addressing these Hebrews. Outside of Hebrews, Paul uses the words “repent” and “repentance” nine times. In Romans 2:4 he uses it in speaking to Jews: in 11:29 in that God does not repent of His gifts and callings. He uses it in 2 Cor. 7:8,9,10; 12:21 in the case of the Corinthians repenting of uncleanness, and his repentance in sending a letter. He uses it in 2 Tim. 2:25 in the acknowledging of the truth. Paul never uses it in any other epistle, nor for a sinner seeking Christ for salvation. Repentance is a subject found most often in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts. It is not found in the Gospel of John nor his epistles. It is found some twelve times in The Revelation.

“Repent” was the key word in John the Baptist’s ministry (Matt. 3:2) the opening words of the beginning of the ministry of Christ (Matt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15); and the opening words of Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:38). It is the key word to the kingdom proclamation.

But the apostle who told them to leave “repentance from dead works” also gave them sufficient reason for so doing: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (9:14)? How much better is the once for all completed purgation from dead works by the blood of Christ? This is the teaching of Col. 2:13 – “Having forgiven you all trespasses”.

b. As Seen in “Faith Toward God”.

Repentance from and faith toward are two aspects of one movement, as “turned to God from idols” contains the negative and positive aspects of one action. In summing up a part of his ministry Paul says in Acts 20:21: “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”.

Paul’s teaching in other epistles:

Gal. 2:16 – “The faith of Jesus Christ”.

2:20 – “The faith of the Son of God”.

3:22 – “The faith of Jesus Christ”.

3:26 – “By faith of Jesus Christ”.

Eph. 1:15 – “Your faith in the Lord Jesus”.

Phil. 3:9 – “By faith of Jesus Christ”.

Col. 2:5 – “Your faith in Christ”.

1 Tim. 3:13 – “The faith which is in Christ Jesus”.

2 Tim. 3:15 – “Through faith which is in Christ Jesus”.

We note in these verses that it is “faith in Jesus Christ”, not in God alone as here in Heb. 6:1. It is faith in justification, resurrection life, the promises, the placing as sons, salvation, etc. The whole old Jewish economy rested upon Jehovah God. Paul wants the Hebrews now to know that “faith toward God” is now “faith in Jesus Christ”.

In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the Pharisee had faith in God or he never would have come to the Temple to pray; the Publican had both faith in God and also in that which typified Christ – “God be propitious (merciful upon the ground of sacrifice) to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13). This man was justified.

c. As Seen in the “Doctrine of Baptisms” (Vr.2)

The word “baptisms” (baptismon) is in the plural. In Eph. 4:5 we have “one baptism”.

The apostle now says that they are to “leave ... the doctrine of baptisms”. To the Ephesians he says: “Endeavor to keep ... one baptism”.

The word “baptismon” occurs again in Heb. 9:10 and is translated “divers washings”. It is also associated with “carnal (or fleshly) ordinances”. The word also occurs in Mark 7:4 and is translated “washings of cups and vessels and brazen utensils and couches”.

In the O.T. ordinances there were many kinds of baptism: washings of persons and utensils; John the Baptist baptized in water, and spoke of Him Who would “baptize in Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11; see also Isa. 4:4; Joel 2:28-32). During Pentecostal Times there were two baptisms, in water and in Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:12,15; 19:5,6; 10:45-47).

So the apostle is now urging these Hebrews to leave behind the baptisms of ceremonial washings or fleshly ordinances, and go on to perfection in Jesus Christ where only one baptism is necessary – baptism in the Holy Spirit

d. As Seen in the “Laying on of Hands” (Vr. 2)

This is closely connected with the two baptisms. In Acts 8:16-18 we read: “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost”. (Also in Acts 19:6; 28:8)

This was the means used in Pentecostal times to bestow spiritual gifts. The Letter to the Corinthians reveals that the possession of these gifts was not the mark of the “perfect” (1 Cor. Chs. 12-14). To rest in them would be to fail.

Today all human instrumentality in bestowing of spiritual gifts has been done away. Christ the exalted One alone bestows the gifts unto men (Eph. 4:8-11).

e. As Seen in “Resurrection of the Dead” (Vr. 2)

The words in the original are: “anastasis nekron”. These words indicate a general resurrection which was taught and believed in O.T. times (See Job 19:25-27; Ps. 17:15; Dan. 12:2). In N.T. times this same general resurrection was taught (See John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15,21. Martha the sister of Lazarus held the same belief (see John 11:24). But in Mark 9:9-10 we discover something new. Here the Lord speaks about: “risen from among the dead” (ek nekron). This was the difficulty that confronted the disciples in the saying of Jesus (Mark 9:10). During the Acts period the apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus out from among the dead (Acts 3:13-15). This grieved the Sadducees that they taught through Jesus a resurrection out from among the dead (Acts 4:1,2,10). Paul teaches concerning resurrection: “But every man in his own order” (1 Cor. 15:23). John speaks of a “first resurrection” before the “thousand years” (Rev. 20:4-6). In Phil. 3:11 Paul wishes to attain unto “the out-resurrection of the dead” (exanastasis ton nekron).

So these Hebrews are now called upon to leave the general resurrection at the last day for a particular resurrection connected with the New Covenant that would lead to aeonian life in the millennial kingdom.

f. As Seen in the “Eternal Judgment” (Vr. 2)

The millennial kingdom will be ushered in by the severest judgment this world has ever seen (see Isa. 66:15-16,24). There will also be a general judgment at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:7-15).

But those who are perfect in Christ cannot come into condemnation (Rom. 8:1); they can only come to the Judgment Seat of Christ – the bema of rewards (2 Cor. 5:10).

“And this we will do if indeed God permit” (Vr. 3).

It is of utmost importance that each one who contemplates running the race, pressing on to the prize, gaining the crown, and being numbered among those who are called “the perfect” should realize the meaning hidden behind these words: “If God permit”. This idea brings us back into the history of Israel in their day of temptation in the wilderness (Num. Ch. 14).

“But they presumed to go up to the hill top”. Then the Canaanites smote them”.

The Israelites who murmured, sinned, and fell in the wilderness were saved (Num. 14:19-20). But they forfeited their opportunity to enter the promised land. Hebrews chapter six deals with “things that accompany salvation” (Vr. 9), not salvation itself.

“If God permit” reveals sometimes that God may not permit. How necessary then that we walk with the Lord that we may go on with Him. It was when Enoch walked with God that God took him. Paul feared most of all that he might “be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).

Esau is a type (12:16-17). The only other occurrence of the word “repentance” in Hebrews is in this passage. It is evident that the case of those spoken of here is illustrated by Esau.

3. THE FRUIT OF IMMATURITY (6:4-8)

This is held to be a most difficult passage. It has been called: “a thorny passage” “bristling with difficulties”. Over it there have been endless discussions. There are several different interpretations:

(1) These people spoken of here were mere professors and not possessors of Christ. Some fearing to jeopardize the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints or eternal security have said that these came short of regeneration, and were never true believers. But Paul calls them “holy brethren” (3:1), and “beloved” (6:9). The enlightenment spoken of here is decisive and final. To say that “tasting of the heavenly gift” is something less than receiving it would require our watering down Christ’s “tasting death for every man” to an experience short of actual death, for the same verb is used in both instances. Dr. Dale says: “I know not how he could have chosen expressions which more forcefully describe the possession of a real and genuine Christian life”.

(2) This is a special sin of apostasy, and not mere backsliding. It is a special sin in which one is capable of annulling or losing salvation. It is the unpardonable sin which a believer can commit and lose his salvation. If this be true then where are the doctrines of election, perseverance, and eternal security?

(3) This represents the so-called “unpardonable sin” of Pentecostal believers, who had truly come to know Christ; but because of persecution were turning back into their former religion of Judaism. (The “Unpardonable Sin” (Matt. 12:31-32) is in the original: “shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the coming one”. This sin would not be forgiven in this present age, nor in the Millennial Age. We are reminded again of the type. Israel had been saved out of Egypt, they were all under the blood; then they came to Kadesh-barnea, where the twelve spies spy out the land. They come back with the evidence: “it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. ... Grapes, pomegranates, and figs. ... Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. Ch. 13). But they rejected this word of the two spies; and then later when they presumed to go in, God intervened, and many were smitten to death (Num. 14:45). We note the expressions: “accompany salvation” and “inherit the promises”

(6:9,12). These Pentecostal believers had come to the experience spiritually what their fathers had experienced physically in the wilderness. The interpretation therefore belongs to the Hebrew Christians of that Pentecostal period; only they could act in this particular way. But the application of the principle affects all who forsake the truth for any given dispensation. Our counterpart today is found in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. See Phil. 3:13-14.

When the kingdom failed to appear and its powers vanished, their repentance also vanished. Hence the impossibility of renewing it, for the means which produced it were no longer there.

a. Nature of the Blessings (4-5)

They had a Divine Illumination (4) "those who were once enlightened". "Enlightened" is from photizo. It occurs again in 10:32 "ye were illuminated". It could be rendered, "once for all enlightened". They had been enlightened through the word and work of Jesus Christ, the word and miracles of the Apostles, and now through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not merely an external, but a real and inward illumination. This illumination was sufficient to keep them from falling, and would be sufficient to bring the curse.

They had a Divine Impartation (4-5) Not only were they enlightened, they were actually partaking of the heavenly blessings. It was an experiential thing with them, as with Israel in the wilderness.

They "tasted of the heavenly gift". Here the author thinks of the manna which fell in the wilderness (Exod. 16:4,15,31). "I am the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51).

They became "partakers of the Holy Spirit". This gift was given on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Later this gift was bestowed by the laying on of hands (Acts 9:17; 19:6). In fact all the spiritual gifts were at this time given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11).

They "tasted the good Word of God". When God saved His people out of Babylon their restoration was called "my good word" (Jer. 29:10). To the word of God are attached life (Acts 5:20); Spirit and life (John 6:63); salvation (Acts 11:14); cleansing (Eph. 5:26); and impartation of the Spirit (John 3:34; Acts 5:32; 10:44; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 2:4).

They also tasted "the powers of the world to come". Kingdom miracles had been performed among them. Christ, His twelve apostles, and Paul had performed miracles over all disease, demon-control, and death. The four Gospels and the Book of Acts are filled with "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 2:3-5). The apostles healed the sick, raised the dead, took up serpents without harm, and were released from prison. These miraculous gifts of the Acts period were foretastes of the coming millennial kingdom.

b. Nature of the Burning (6-8)

"It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance ... if they shall fall away".

This is the stark reality under the kingdom program of the New Covenant. "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh". The New Covenant with its spiritual blessings was made possible by the death of Christ on the cross. To reject this work now, and go back to Judaism would be to undo all this work. It would be impossible to start at John's baptism again and come the way of the cross to their present status. The death of Ananias and Sapphira illustrate what can happen to those who commit any sin under the New Covenant (Acts 5:1-11).

The author then gives an illustration, a figure taken from a field (Vrs.7-8). Two words are important here: "rejected", better translated "disapproved"; and "nigh unto cursing". Paul speaks of the same thing in 1 Cor. 9:27 (24-27) – "a castaway". "If any man's work shall be burned" (1 Cor. 3:15). See also 1 Cor. Ch. 10; Matt. Ch. 25.

It is what the earth produced, not the earth itself that is cursed with burning. When God sends His blessing of rain and sun, and the earth brings forth thorns and briars it is rejected and burned.

4. THE FINALE OF IMMATURITY (9-20)

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, things that accompany salvation, ... inherit the promises” (9,12).

The apostle mingles warning and consolation in his exhortations to these Hebrews. He had just concluded one of the most solemn of warnings – “for it is impossible, ... to renew them again unto repentance”. This is Paul’s style of turning from warning to tenderness and grace. (See also Rom. 15:14-15).

“But beloved”. This is the only place in the Epistle where he so names them; for he wanted them to know that the severity of the warning arose, not from hatred, but from love.

“Things that accompany salvation”. This indicates that they were saved, but lacked in those things which would lead on to perfection – “through faith and patience”.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6). It is wise to set before them the full possible outcome of declension; but now he is going to set before them the way of perfection which leads to peace and prosperity.

a. Through Encouragement to go on (9-12)

“persuaded better things of you, ... that accompany salvation”.

It is important to remember that a sinner is justified without works, but is perfected by works. A man is saved by faith “not of works” but he has been saved to walk in “good works” (Eph. 2:10). We are to be “a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14).

The spiritual dullness and sluggishness of these Hebrews had not checked their active exercise of Christian love. In this the apostle found assurance of better things. He speaks here of “love”, “hope”, and “faith”. (See also 1 Thess. 1:3)

He had confidence in them. They had exhibited “a labor of love”. Brotherly love is a principal trait of the Christian. These Hebrews had been kind to their afflicted fellow-believers. God had not forgotten their liberality. The spiritual attainments already reached are an encouragement to perseverance.

He had concern for them (11-12) “... show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end”. The activity of practical love among them fills the apostle with a desire that this spirit may work among them in “hope unto the end”. Their hope in pressing on was chilling. Notice that this love is done “toward His name”. A name is the sum of all the qualities of God. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. We are forgiven for His name’s sake. We are told to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. So love unto the name of the Lord is shown by ministry unto the saints. It is through faith and patience that they are to press on and make their hope a reality in perfection.

b. Through Example to go on (13-18)

“For when God made promise to Abraham, ... after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise”.

Abraham is now taken as the great father of faith, who did labor of love, and went on in hope to inherit the promises. The writer now shows how absolutely secure were the promises made to Abraham.

The Promise: “I will make of thee a great nation”. “I will bless thee”. “I will make thy name great”. “Thou shalt be a blessing”. “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). “a land and a seed” (Gen. 13:15; 15:18; 17:15-19). God confirmed His promise with an unconditional covenant – “I will” (Gen. 17:4-8).

The Oath: When God had sorely tested His servant and friend and Abraham had willingly yielded to God’s wish in the matter of sacrificing Isaac, He confirmed the promise and covenant with an oath (Gen. 22:15-18). So first Abraham received the promise (Gen. 12:1-3); then God confirmed it by an unconditional covenant (Gen. 15:18; 17:4-8) and finally by an oath (Gen. 22:15-18). All this was to show the absolute unchangeable character of the promise God had made to Abraham; and if that were true with him it would be just as true with the N.T. Hebrews. After the oath, Abraham dwelt at Beersheba: “well of the oath”.

The example of Abraham established two things: “the immutability of His (God’s) counsel” and “a strong consolation ... to lay hold upon the hope set before us”.

c. Through Experience to Go On (19-20)

“Which hope we have”. The “hope” is now connected with the end of the race, the perfection set before them.

The A.V. translates katapheugo by “fled for refuge”. This is not a good translation. It is true that this word is translated in Septuagint (Greek) Version of the O.T. in several places for fleeing to the city of refuge. And these A.V. translators must have gotten their idea from this occasion. A better translation, which is in keeping with the context is: “Who have fled along to lay hold upon the hope set before us”. This same Greek word is found in Ps. 19:5-6 where it is translated “to run a race”. It is also used in Esther for the “posts” that ran with letters (3:13,15; 8:10,14).

This “hope” is said to be “an anchor of the soul”. An anchor is usually used at the end of a voyage. The only other use of an anchor in the N.T. is at Acts 27:29,30,40. It has to do with the end of the voyage. This hope is both “sure and steadfast”.

This hope enter in “within the veil”. There are eight words in verse 19 which have each four letters, but the most important of them all is no doubt the word “THAT”. We ask what was in behind the veil? Here was the “ark of the covenant”, “the mercy seat”, with “the cherubims of glory”. In the ark were “the golden pot” that had manna, and “Aaron’s rod” that budded, and the “tables of the covenant” (Heb. 9:3-5). This represents: God’s Righteousness – the unbroken tables of stone; unchanging Priesthood – the rod that budded; the wilderness Provision – The manna

Into the heavenly holiest of all Jesus Christ as the Forerunner has entered. The word translated “forerunner” is prodromos. It was used of men or troops which were sent to explore before the advance of an army. It is also taken from the harbors of the Mediterranean where may be seen a great stone embedded in the ground near the waters edge. This rock was the anchoria. When ships could not make harbor because of storms a “prodromos” would go ashore in a smaller boat with a line that was made fast to the anchoria. That line was sure and steadfast. Then the bigger ship could draw to land.

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus Name.

III. CHRIST IS BETTER IN CONDUCT (7:1 – 8:5) (Like Melchisedec)

INTRODUCTION:

The context – The author now comes back to the line of thought that he broke off at 5:10: Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec”. This was followed by a lengthy parenthetical section (5:11 – 6:20) with its warning and appeal.

We shall now enter upon the study of the most mysterious character in all of Scripture – Melchisedec. He comes before us with the same characteristics as the Book of Hebrews which like Melchisedec has no record of human origin. This person has already been named three times in this book – 5:6,10; 6:20, and will occur four times more in this chapter, making seven times in all.

Three different sections of the Bible speak of this King-priest: Gen. 14:18-20 in which we have the Historical Type; then in Psalm 110:4, in which we find the Prophetical Theme; and now in Hebrews Ch. 7 where we find the Doctrinal Truth.

Who was this personage? Several different answers have been given:

1. He was Shem. Abraham was 150 years old when Shem died. This would be about fifty years after this scene took place in which Abraham met Melchisedec.

2. He was a patriarchal king-priest like Job. He worshipped God after a primitive fashion.

3. He was Christ in angelic form – a Christophany. This is based upon verses 3 and 8. See Gen. 32:24; Josh. 5:13; Judg. 13:3,9.

4. He was just an ordinary man with an extraordinary position as King-Priest. There is no record of any pedigree establishing parentage such as in the case of Aaron (Ezra 2:62). He did not hold office only for the period of 20 years (30 to 50) (Num. 4:3). The word “descent” should read genealogy. Therefore the expressions in verse three are not absolute, but relative.

The important word to see here is the word “order” in 6:20 – “after the order of Melchisedec”. The author is contrasting the order of the Aaronic priesthood with that of Melchisedec and Christ.

So the Melchisedec order is God’s original. It antedates Abraham, and thus also Levi and Aaron by several hundred years. Aaron’s line was both temporary and imperfect. Melchisedec is noted as much for what he is not, as for what he is.

The Aaronic priesthood, as is every priesthood patterned after it, is a treadmill which never goes anywhere. After winning a decisive victory over the wicked kings of the East, Abraham meets God’s King-priest, Melchisedec. So in a future day, after the slaughter of all the enemies of Israel, she will meet the real Melchisedec, her King-Priest Jesus Christ; and then He will reign with them throughout the Millennium. Abraham meets the king of Sodom and the King of Salem. To the first Abraham gave renunciation; to the latter he gave recognition; independence to the King of Sodom, and dependence to the king of Salem.

It was because Moses refused to accept God’s appointed office for him that Aaron his brother was given the mediatorial office. It is God’s purpose that Israel shall be “a kingdom of priests” (Exod. 19:6); and “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9).

A. By Way of Illustration (7:1-10)

We are now introduced to Melchisedec. In names, in nature, and in office this priest is superior to Aaron, and the Aaronic priesthood. He is both King and Priest, King of righteousness and King of Salem. He is “priest of the Most High God”.

He needs no genealogy to establish his office. The two offices of king and priest were kept distinct and separate under the dispensation of the Law. The awful doom that befell

UZZIAH when as the king he intruded into the priest's office and burned incense on the altar (2 Chron. 26:16-21). Only Christ can fulfill the two offices of King-Priest (Zech. 6:12-13).

We now have several illustrations of the fact that the Melchisedec priesthood is superior in Christ to that of Aaron.

1. Melchisedec Blesses Abraham (1)

"Melchisedec, ... met Abraham, ... and blessed him".

The less is always blessed by the greater (Vr. 7). The Aaronic priesthood imparted blessing to Israel (Num 6:22-27). In the Aaronic setup there were three divisions: First, the whole congregation of Israel; then secondly, the Tribe of Levi separated unto the service of the Lord; and then finally, the High Priest and his family. It was by the latter alone that blessing could be imparted.

Abraham was the father of the nation. He was justified, blessed by God with promises and a covenant, a friend of God; but less than Melchisedec; and so received a blessing from him. His blessing included "bread and wine" (Gen. 14:18), emblems of the body and blood of Christ which Israel would receive later as a blessing from Christ Himself (Matt. 26:26-28). Abraham as a pilgrim now gets the blessing of pilgrimage indicative of spiritual separation, sustentation, and satisfaction.

This is a powerful argument for the writer in showing that Christ is superior to Aaron.

2. Melchisedec Receives Tithes of Abraham (7:2,4-6)

This came about at the time of Abraham's earthly achievement – the conquering of the kings, recovering of the spoil, and delivering the captives.

The word used for spoils is akrothinion. It is composed of two words – "thin" a heap of corn; and "akros" the top. The top of a heap of corn indicates the very best. He gave a tenth of all this.

The right of the Levites to take tithes places them above their brethren in spiritual matters, implying a higher dignity and position. But to Melchisedec, Levi paid tithes in Abraham as his father. And if Melchisedec is so great, how much greater must He be of whom Melchisedec is but a type. As the substance is greater than the shadow, so is Christ greater than Melchisedec, and also Aaron.

3. Melchisedec has an Endless Priesthood (Vr. 3)

"...abideth a priest continually".

In the Aaronic priesthood men died, and their successors were ordained. Aaron died and they mourned his death (Num. 20:29).

But there is no recorded death in Melchisedec. So it is with Christ, though He died yet He was raised, and ever liveth, making intercession (25).

4. Melchisedec Had Greater Names (2)

"King of righteousness". "King of Salem, King of Peace".

These two go together: "The work of righteousness is peace". There can be no peace apart from righteousness. The Prince of Peace must also be The Lord our righteousness.

His personal name is "King of righteousness". His royal name is "King of Salem, which is, King of Peace". Righteousness is the quality of which right is the principle. It embraces the ideas of justice, truth, equity, rectitude, integrity. Peace is a state of mental, moral,

and spiritual equilibrium or poise. Hence righteousness and peace are vitally related. Righteousness is a cause of which peace is an effect; righteousness is a root, Peace is a flower; Righteousness is an origin, peace is an issue; righteousness is a character, peace is a consequence; righteousness is an energy, peace is an emotion; righteousness is a means, peace is an end.

Peace can no more precede righteousness than the flower can precede the root; the effect precede the cause; the issue precede the origin; or the end the means.

“Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps. 85:10).

“Great peace have they that love thy law (righteousness) Ps. 119:165.

“The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence forever” Isa. 32:17.

“The way of peace they know not and there is no justice (righteousness) in their goings” (Isa. 59:8).

The death of Christ upon the cross is described as “the one act of righteousness” (Rom. 5:18). In His death He met every righteous requirement. On this basis alone peace has been made.

Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:20-21). There will come a day when God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31), then universal peace will come. We cannot have individual, social, or international peace until we have individual righteousness.

As Melchisedec ministered to Abraham after he had gained the victory over the federated kings, so the greater Melchisedec will minister to His own people in the day of victory and restoration (Rev. 19:19-21).

It is clear therefore that in the dignity of his person, the record of his career, the bestowal of blessing and the significance of his names, Melchisedec takes precedence over the greatest and noblest of men including Abraham, Aaron, and the long succession of priests, kings, and prophets. Yet he is only a type, a shadow of the greater One, Jesus Christ.

No O.T. name is more illustrious than that of Abraham, the patriarch; no idol worshipper from Ur of the Chaldees could boast marks of greater honor than that given to Abraham – Father of the Faithful, “the friend of God”. Yet this venerated founder of the Hebrew nation humbly acknowledged the superiority of Melchisedec. Tithes were given by the people to the priests. But here we have a Gentile receiving tithes from a Hebrew.

Thus we see the unparalleled majesty of the Lord Jesus. Abraham was greater than Aaron; Melchisedec was greater than Abraham; but Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than Melchisedec. Therefore from the historical figure there emerges the spiritual fulfillment – Melchisedec to Christ.

B. BY WAY OF INTERPRETATION (7:11 – 8:5)

After having given us the illustration of the better priesthood of Christ over against the Aaronic, in the person of Melchisedec; the writer now proceeds to give the interpretation.

“Changes are lightsome, and fools like them” says an old Scottish proverb, reflecting the conservative element of the Scottish. But in this world of change and decay frequently the only way to avoid decay is to affect a change. God does not change in His nature: “for there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17) with Him. But He does change His modus operandi – His mode of operation. As God looked down the corridor of the ages until the coming of His perfect Son, He decreed the unfolding of His plan of redemption in various ways for each succeeding generation.

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood”. This is the opening statement of our text. The end which God aims at is PERFECTION. But they were not made perfect by their Aaronic priesthood. It would be very difficult for the Hebrews to acknowledge the failure of the Aaronic priesthood. Yet this is distinctly involved in the announcement of a priest “after the order of Melchisedec”. Had Christ been associated with Aaron, He would have

been associated with an order that began in failure, ended in failure, and could not make anyone perfect. It is at this point that the author will now show, namely that the old order could make no one perfect – hence the need of another order of priesthood.

The Aaronic priesthood and the Law are inseparably connected – “the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the Law”. The Law showed them the absolute need of perfection by their imperfection, for neither the Law nor the old order of priesthood could make them perfect. So the imperfection of the Law and the imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood are inseparable. So if I am determined to live under the Legal system, then I should be consistent, erect an altar, sacrifice a lamb, and come before a Levitical priest.

In 7:1-10 the author gives us the Historical background of Melchisedec as seen in Genesis Ch. 14; he now proceeds to give us the truth connected with the prophetical revelation as seen in Psalm 110:4, “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

1. CHRIST IS A PERFECT PRIEST (11-19)

“if therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, ... after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest”. In His ministry on earth, our Lord was the perfect revelation of God to man. In His ministry in Heaven, He is the perfect representative of man to God.

The author bases his argument of perfection upon two things that are better. These are connected with two men.

a. Because of a Better Order (Judah) 11-14

The imperfection of the Law and the imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood are inseparable.

Jesus sprang out of Judah and not from Levi. The Law that God gave to Moses was based upon a priesthood that could administer it, make the sacrifice required by it, and bless the people in the name of Jehovah.

So if God does away with the priesthood in Levi, the Law given by Moses also goes. A change in priesthood necessitated a change in Law.

These Hebrews wanted to cling to the old and also to the new. Judaisers tried to get the Gentile believers to adopt the law with the gospel (Gal. Ch. 1; Col. Ch. 2), but Paul was most vehement in his denunciation of this mixture. Human nature does not change. We still like to deed our pride by keeping the ordinances, serving in self-effort, and seeking justification through works. Keeping a Sabbath outwardly is easier than entering into God’s rest, and ceasing from our own works (4:10). Tithing is easier than a complete self-surrender and stewardship (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Trivial sacrifices, during Lent, are easier and more showy than offering our whole self for Christ every day (Phil. 2:17).

The order of the Levitical priesthood was therefore only temporary, and thus imperfect.

b. Brought in by a Better Hope (15-19)

“...the bringing in of a better hope did”. This hope is connected with Melchisedec as a type of Christ.

The old order was under “the law of a carnal (or fleshly) commandment”. The conditions of this priesthood were based upon the flesh – the succession of the priesthood, the cleansings of personal sins, the continual service at the altar. These all suggest imperfection. Christ needed none of these as Melchisedec came with none of these.

So another priest arose, not from the tribe of Levi, but from Judah, “of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood”. And the change of priesthood carries with it a change of Law, for the Law gave the priesthood to Levi. So “the law made nothing perfect”, although the Law itself was perfect.

2. CHRIST IS A PERMANENT PRIEST (20-24)

“the power of an endless life” (16)

“Thou art a priest forever” (17)

“Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec” (21)

“...continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood” (24)

The priesthood of Christ is a matter of permanency. There is no change, no disturbance, no successors, and no death – “He ever liveth”. The element of unchangeableness is due to the fact of the Divine oath. The Aaronic priests were made priests without the swearing of an oath (21). But unto Christ: “The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”. Because of this He is the Mediator of a New Covenant (22). For this reason He has a permanent priesthood.

In the Levitical priesthood there were changes due to death; but in marked contrast to this, Christ lives forever. Hence it cannot be altered, and it cannot be transmitted to anyone else. There is therefore no succession of the priesthood of Christ, in Heaven, on earth, or anywhere else. Death ended the life of every Aaronic priest, but here is One in whom death has been conquered, and He ever lives.

3. CHRIST IS A POWERFUL PRIEST (25-28)

“able to save to the uttermost” (25)

“made higher than the heavens” (26)

Because He was perfect in His character and conduct, He is both perfect and powerful in all His work. He is always there, always ready, always faithful, always competent, always true.

a. By the Extent of His Purpose (25)

“able to save to the uttermost, ... seeing He ever liveth to make intercession”.

This twenty-fifth verse is the crown of the argument of this whole section. In fact everything else in the Epistle is included in it. For He is able to save completely all who come to God through Him.

The Greek word translated “uttermost” is panteles, from pan (all) and telos (end or perfect with a purpose). The word means completely, thoroughly, to all intents, degrees, and purposes. So the Holy Spirit uses the strongest term to tell that Christ can instantaneously and completely save everyone who comes “by Him”. Christ not only saves us from the penalty of sin, but also from the power and presence of sin.

b. By the Efficiency of His Person (26)

“Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”.

He is “HOLY” – There are three words in the Greek translated “holy”: hagios, hosios, and hieros. Hosios is the word used here. Hagios implies the thought of separation, dedication; but hosios suggests holiness that can stoop to have mercy upon those who are

themselves defiled, without contracting defilement thereby. The Syriac Version uses a word that means “pure”. This was Christ’s inherent character from birth (Luke 1:35).

He is “HARMLESS” – The Greek word here is akakos. In hosios, “He knew no sin; in akakos “He did no sin neither was guile found in His mouth”.

In Rom. 16:18 this word is translated “simple”. In the LXX Version of Psalm 26, akakos occurs in verses 1 and 11, and is translated “integrity”. He had impeccable integrity. He had no fellowship with vain persons and dissemblers, but rather hatred of all wicked works.

He is “UNDEFILED” – The Greek word here is amiantos. This word is also found in Heb. 13:4; Jas. 1:27; 1 Pet. 1:4. The difference between akakos and Amiantos is that in the former it means the Lord did no evil; while in the latter He could not be contaminated to evil from anyone. He touched a leper but He needed no cleansing. A woman with an issue of blood touched Him, but no contamination passed from her to Him. He could eat and drink with publicans, sinners, harlots; and called by the Pharisees: “a gluttonous man and a winebibber, and friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt. 11:19). But He ever remained “the lamb without blemish and without spot”. He was without natural blemish (akakos), and without contracted spot (amiantos).

The Levitical priesthood sinned and needed a sacrifice. The Lord knew no sin, did no sin, and needed no sacrifice.

He is “SEPARATE FROM SINNERS” – As to His manhood, He was born of a woman, yet from birth remained “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35). While partaker of flesh and blood, yet He came only “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). As to manner of life He was truly a Man Who ate, drank, slept, worked, suffered, and died. To the woman of Samaria He was a “Jew” (Jn. 4:9). To His fellow-townsmen He was “Joseph’s son” (Jn. 6:42). Yet throughout His life, He was ever “separate from sinners”. Never once is He addressed by His disciples or contemporaries by the name Jesus. There was no unholy familiarity. He is called Rabbi, a great Man, a Teacher. He is the Lord.

He was “holy” and “harmless” as to His nature; He was “undefiled” and “separate from sinners” as to practice.

c. By the Efficacy of His Performance (27-28)

“...once, He offered up himself”. “Who is perfected for evermore”.

He offered ONE sacrifice “ONCE” for all. He offered not daily bulls and goats, but HIMSELF. “ONCE” and “HIMSELF” set forth the absolute perfection, permanence, and power of this One’s sacrifice, and ability to save eternally all who come unto Him.

In verse 28 we have a contrast between the “Law” and “the word of the oath”. The “Law” operated with weak, sinful men; while the “oath” was given to Him Who is absolutely perfect. God revealed “the immutability of His counsel” by “confirming it by an oath” (6:17). The “oath” we are told “was since the law”. What this implies is explained in 7:11. The “oath” was subsequent to the “Law”. Perfection could only come after the order of Melchisedec.

4. CHRIST IS A PRE-EMINENT PRIEST (8:1-5)

“Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”.

The contrast and comparison between Christ and all others is now complete. He is greater than angels, than Moses, Joshua, and Aaron and even greater than Melchisedec.

“This is the sum”. The writer has now reached his chief point. The word “sum” is kephalaion, and can be translated “crown” or “chief point”. “We have such an high priest”. This is it. There is none other, and there will be none other. So if we now go back into the shadows of the Levitical Priesthood, we annul His work in our lives.

The “sum” or crown of all this is that this new sanctuary is “in the heavens”. The Chief Priest is the Son of God. His priestly work began after His ascension (Vr. 4). The Levitical priesthood was instituted at Mt. Sinai (Exod. Ch. 24), after Israel’s redemption from Egypt, and for the purpose of maintaining the people in the blessedness of redemption.

a. A Minister on the Heavenly Throne (Vr. 1)

Aaron and all his followers in the priesthood have ministered on earth; but this One is ministering on a throne of God in the heavens. This Priest is therefore in the loftiest place; for He exercised his priesthood in an earthly sanctuary made by men’s hands, but Christ in the heavenly created by God.

The earthly tabernacle and temple furniture did not include a seat. Aaron’s work was never completed; hence he never sat down. But Christ has finished His work, and sits down on the throne. Christ’s work in dealing with sin on earth was completed “once” and “finished” (John 19:30). All other offerings for sin were abolished when He offered Himself “once” for sin. So the Divine decree now is: “no more offering for sin” and “no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:18,26). By entering into the rest of His finished work, one has the rest of faith which worketh by love. When He arises from this seat and comes again, He will bring complete restoration to all creation, His People Israel, and the Gentile nations.

b. A Minister of the Heavenly Tabernacle (2-5)

“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched”.

It was a great day and days when Aaron entered the earthly sanctuary; but a greater day when this High Priest entered the heavenly sanctuary!

Here we have the substance for the shadows. There is a contrast between “the true tabernacle” and “the shadow of heavenly things”. The tabernacle and its service here on earth were patterned after a heavenly original. This earthly copy was given to teach the great lesson of God’s righteousness and holiness, and man’s unfitness and distance from God; as well as the way of approach to God. The old was therefore but a shadow; Christ is the substance. There may be many photographs of a mansion; but a legatee is not satisfied with a mere photo. He wants the mansion of which the photos are but shadows. The sad thing about these Hebrews as with many still, they cling to the shadows, the law and the ritual of a by-gone day. They are admonished to lay hold upon heavenly realities.

We have also here the Sacrifice for the sacrifices (3). We are told “He offered up himself” (7:27). Christ made His eternal offering at Calvary, and then entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies with His own blood. If this Man were on earth He could not be a priest and offer sacrifices; for He is not of Levi. And there were at that time priests on earth making sacrifices according to the Law. So the earthly ministry of Israel’s priests pales before the glorious light of the heavenly ministry of Christ.

The effort to perpetuate an earthly priesthood, a priestly class, during this present church age of boundless grace has turned the eyes of many from a Savior in Heaven to a religious system on earth.

C. THE PERFECT REDEMPTION 8:6- 10:18

LESSON # 7 - THE BETTER COVENANT

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 8:6–13)

INTRODUCTION:

The contrast and comparison between Christ and all others is now complete. He is greater than Angels, than Moses, than Joshua, and Aaron. He is also the great antitype of Melchisedec. As such He is worthy of the best service, sacrifice, and stewardship.

“He obtained a more excellent ministry”. His ministry is “more excellent” because it is heavenly and not earthly, spiritual and not physical, reality and not shadow, permanent and not temporal. The Levitical priesthood has now given place to the heavenly tabernacle, the true tabernacle in heaven. No one has ever ministered there save Jesus Christ.

“He is the Mediator of a better covenant” (8:6; 9:15; 12:24). We are told “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). The fallen race had no access to God, except through His chosen mediators. The Aaronic was only a shadow of the true, a faint adumbration of the real Mediator – Jesus Christ.

A covenant is a solemn pact or agreement. In the N.T. the word is diatheke, meaning a disposition of property by will, a will and testament. The O.T. Hebrew word is berith, meaning simply a covenant agreement, from “to cut”, because the victims of the sacrifice were cut in two, or divided in making covenants (Gen. 15:9; Jer. 34:18-19). The Greek word is also translated “testament” (Heb. 7:22; 9:16,17,20). A covenant is made either conditionally between two parties, or unconditionally by one, as by God alone with Abraham and David, unconditional, irreversible, and indestructible.

Covenants are of two kinds: conditional and unconditional. The conditional asks: “will ye”; the unconditional says: “I will”. There are at least six distinct covenants:

(1) The Edenic – (Gen. 2:15-17; Hos. 6:6-7). This was made with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and was conditional.

(2) The Noahic – (Gen. 8:8-17). This was established with Noah and his sons, and all his posterity – “a covenant between me and the earth” (13). It was unconditional.

(3) The Abrahamic – (Gen. 12:1-3). This is another unconditional covenant. It was confirmed, ratified, and added to as time went on. See Gen. 13:14-17; 15:5-6; 15:17ff; 17:2-7; 22:16-18). It was also confirmed by an oath. There is a full allusion to it in Heb. 6:13-18).

(4) The Mosaic – (Exod. Chs. 19-20: 24:7; Gal. 3:19. This was the covenant made with Moses at Mt. Sinai, and called “the old testament” (2 Cor. 3:14). This Law Covenant was (1) “added because of transgressions”; (2) “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made”; (3) “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”. It was conditional.

(5) The Davidic – (2 Sam. Ch. 7). This covenant was made with David and was unconditional. It had to do with the throne and the royal house of Israel and Judah.

(6) The New Covenant – (Jer. 31:31-34; 35-37; Heb. Ch. 8). This is another unconditional covenant, and under it there is: (1) Revelation of love in mercy; (12); (2) Revelation of law in their hearts and minds (10); (3) Revelation of liberty and life through knowledge (11).

This New Covenant will be made Dispensationally with Israel and Judah (8,10). This covenant is radically different from the Old , for the people have no active part in it. All depends on Jehovah, hence it will not be a failure because:

The Law that was written on stones will be written in their minds and hearts;
Instead of demanding a penalty for every infraction, He will be propitious;

Instead of recalling their sins and lawlessness, He will blot them out;
Instead of an “atonement” or covering for sin made by the blood of he-goats and calves, the blood of Christ will completely put them away.

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OLD COVENANT (7-9; 13)

The writer begins his contrast between the Old and New Covenants by showing the place and purpose of the Old.

1. Its Founding (Exod. Chs. 19,20)

Three months after God’s redemption of His people from Egypt, He led them to Mt. Sinai. There God founded the covenant called: The Mosaic, The Legal, The Old.

Israel was in a state of pupilage, infancy, a childhood stage. The child must be controlled by positive external precepts. During Israel’s pupilage, the Divine laws were written on tablets of stone.

2. Its Failures

“For if that first covenant had been faultless” (7). “For finding fault with them” (8). There was nothing the matter with the Law itself (See Rom. 7:7-14).

“Every work of God is perfect, viewed in connection with the purpose which He means it to serve. In this point of view, the ‘first covenant’ was faultless. But when viewed in the light in which the Jews generally considered it, as a saving economy, in all the extent of that word, it was not ‘faultless’. It could not expiate moral guilt; it could not wash away moral pollution; it could not justify, it could not sanctify, it could not save. Its priesthood were not perfected – they were weak and inefficient; its sacrifices ‘could not take away sin’, make perfect as concerning the conscience, or procure ‘access with freedom into the holiest of all’. In one word, ‘it made nothing perfect’” - - John Brown.

a. Because it was Conditional (Exod. 19:5).

In 7:18 the author speaks of the weakness and unprofitableness of the Law of the Old Covenant. In the following chapters he shows that the sacrifices of this covenant could not settle the sin problem (9:9; 10:1-3). These were “faults or defects”, not as wrongs, but that they left something to be desired.

This Law being conditional was powerless because of the weakness of the human flesh to keep it. In this covenant both parties must keep it or else it will fail, and God must punish His people (Isa. 6:9-13; Jer. 29:16ff).

b. Because it Became Obsolete (13)

When God revealed to Jeremiah the coming of a New Covenant, it was obvious that the Old was out-fated and obsolete. As one physically and mentally puts away childish things when one becomes a man or woman; so one puts away spiritually those things which belong to a childhood experience (See Gal. 4:1-11).

With the development of the transistor a few years ago, amplifying equipment began to be built on an entirely different principle. Ordinary transistors are only a quarter of an inch long, and very narrow.

II. SUPREMACY OF THE NEW COVENANT (10-13)

“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Vr. 8)
Mr. C.H. Welch in commenting on the New Covenant says: “There are still quite a number of God’s children who have hazy ideas concerning the New Covenant (or testament as it is translated in Matt. 26:28), therefore it will be helpful if we set out its chief features from the passage before us:

(1) The New Covenant is made with Israel and Judah and with no other people.

(2) It was not engraved upon stone as at Sinai, but written upon the heart.

(3) The Old Covenant was connected with the exodus from Egypt and its commemorative feast was the Passover, while the New Covenant is connected with a greater and a spiritual deliverance, and its commemorative feast was instituted at the Passover by the Lord (Matt. 26:26).

(4) It is essentially connected with the national restoration of Israel (Jer. 31:35-40).

(5) The only reference to this New Covenant memorial feast, outside the three synoptic gospels (for John omits it) is in that section of 1 Corinthians that is addressed to those whose “Fathers” went through the Red Sea. This section covers chapters ten and eleven. With chapter twelve the Apostle addresses those who were “Gentiles” and who had been idolaters (1 Cor. 12:1-2”).

1. Because of a New Method (10)

Note the “I wills” in verses 10 and 12. This reminds of Ezek. 36:26-27.

The Old Covenant was written in stone, but this one will be written in the mind and heart. “Mind” refers to the intellectual part of man’s nature – his understanding. “Heart” indicates not only man’s affections, but the center of his personality, His will.

When God writes His Law in our minds we get a clear perception of His will; when He writes them in our hearts, He makes our wills coincide with His will, and we love it so. This is God’s highest goal for His people.

2. Because of a New Ministry (12)

“I will be merciful ... I will remember no more”.

In Jeremiah chapter 31 where this New Covenant is first given to Israel, verses 31-34 are followed immediately by the word indicating clearly that this covenant with the nation of Israel is as stable and certain as the sun, moon, and stars in the natural world.

Israel, under the Old Covenant, revealed once and for all the utter inability of the flesh to enter into blessing by a covenant of works. This necessitated the New Covenant with its better promises and better sacrifice, and hence a better ministry.

3. Because of a New Mediator (6)

“He is the Mediator of a better covenant”.

This is the reason for it all – it is all because of whom He is and what He has done.
Robert Hadden says: “In Christ, we have –

A love that can never be fathomed.
A life that can never die.
A righteousness that can never be tarnished.
A peace that cannot be understood.
A rest that can never be disturbed.
A joy that can never be diminished.
A hope that can never be disappointed.
A glory that can never be clouded.

CONCLUSION:

This New Covenant will be fully established with Israel in the Kingdom, a converted and restored national people. It will be the fulfillment of God’s great prophetic purpose in His people.

Our relationship to the New Covenant as members of the Church the Body of Christ may be said to be foundational, but in no wise functional. We both have the same foundation, namely Christ in His work of redemption – His death, resurrection, and ascension. This New Covenant can only be functional through God’s people Israel.

Great God of wonders, all thy ways
Are matchless, Godlike, and divine,
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine!
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?

C. THE PERFECT REDEMPTION (8:6 – 10:18)

LESSON # 8 - THE BETTER SANCTUARY

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 9:1-11)

INTRODUCTION:

“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary” (Vr. 1). “But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building” (Vr. 11).

Shadow and Substance – The difference between the old order and the new is the difference between shadow and substance. The shadow is real, but only temporary in its nature and purpose. It had value for the purpose of instruction during days of minority or immaturity. The substance is abiding and eternal. Shadows or figures were imposed on them until the time of reformation (10).

In these verses the shadows and figures of the Old Covenant are set forth in the tabernacle, and contrasted with Him Who is the true tabernacle. Westcott has pointed out that it is the tabernacle (the Greek word skene and not hieron is used throughout in this passage) and not the temple, that is used for spiritual teaching. He suggests that the temple being a stationary edifice was purely secondary, and was not God’s ideal for the people.

Over the doorway of a certain cathedral are the words, “The temple of God is holy”. But no particular building today is holy as a temple of God. This verse is applied to believers as is seen in 1 Cor. 3:17; 6:19-20). The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands is stated both by Stephen and Paul (Acts 7:48; 17:24).

The effort to mix the Old and New Covenants has always brought confusion. Priestly vestments, swinging censers, elaborate ritual, and religious processions all belong to the old order of a by-gone day. Christ, the great High Priest, is in Heaven, not on earth; and so true worship today is in spirit and truth, not in any formal display (John 4:24). Worship today centers in a Savior, not a system. Christianity as a system is a poor substitute for Christ as a personal Savior.

Hebrews is the New Testament Leviticus – Nothing can be duller than looking at a stained glass window from the outside; but go inside and the whole is aglow with beauty, symmetry, and reality. Looking at Leviticus from Hebrews one gets a new view of God’s work and way of worship.

I. THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY (1-10)

“The first covenant has also ceremonies, and a worldly sanctuary”. “For there was a tabernacle made”.

The word “worldly” here means “earthly, material” as against the heavenly (9:24), of which this earthly is but a type, figure, a parable.

The word “tabernacle” is the common name for the whole fabric. The word “made” includes the; provision of materials made by the people, the workings of those materials by Bezaleel; and the erection of the whole under the instruction of Moses.

1. ITS FURNITURE (1-5)

The tabernacle proper consisted of two parts: The Holy Place and Most Holy Place. There was also an outer court in which there were two articles of furniture – the Brazen Altar of

sacrifice, and the Laver for washing. The author makes no mention of these, because they were typical of Israel's experience in Egypt with the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. Now he is dealing with their Wilderness Experience, and so with the Tabernacle proper.

a. The Holy Place (2) (Greek – hagia; Hebrew – quodesh)

(1) The Candlestick (Lampstand) (Exod. 26:35; 40:22-25) The lampstand testified to the truth of testimony. No sunlight could enter the holy place. All light was supplied by the holy oil, which typified the Holy Spirit; thus indicating that all real knowledge of God must come, not through the light of nature, but through divine revelation by the Spirit of God. In the life of the Spirit there is heavenly light on all matters. In place of the murky darkness of human understanding, there is the true light, Christ the Light of the world (John 8:12).

(2) The Table of Showbread. The bread is typical of Him Who is the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. He is God's delight and man's sustenance. Communion with God is possible only through Him. Christ is the Bread of Life, the true Bread that came down from Heaven (See John Ch. 6). The Holy Place speaks of man's need in approaching God.

b. The Most Holy Place (3-5) (Greek – hagia hagian; Hebrew godish godashim).

The author gives most of his attention here because he is dealing with the matter of getting in to the holiest of all – the place of perfection. “the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all”.

(1) The Golden Censer (“Golden Altar, R.V.) (Exod. 30:1-10; 37:25-28; 40:5-6) This was placed before the veil in the Holy Place and once a year on the Great Day of Atonement taken by the priest into the Most Holy Place (Lev. 16:12-13). This censer was made of gold, as was the ark, the pot of manna, the Cherubims, and the mercy seat. Gold is the most suitable, the most precious and the most durable metal known to man. It points to heavenly glory, the heavenly city – the New Jerusalem.

(2) The Ark of the Covenant – This ark with its mercy seat was the most majestic and most mysterious piece of furniture of the Tabernacle. It was the seat of Divine presence. The whole sanctuary was built around it. All flesh was excluded from the sight of this ark, the High Priest excepted. He entered the Most Holy Place once a year with blood, fire, and incense.

Into this Ark there were placed three precious things:

(a) Golden Pot of Manna (Exod. 16:33). This spoke of Christ as the permanent sustenance of His people. As the manna fed His people in the wilderness with physical food (Exod. 16:15,35), so Christ would feed His people with spiritual food (1 Cor. 10:3; John 6:33-35). So an omer of manna was laid up for perpetual generations to see, until Christ the true Bread would come (John 6:48-51).

(b) Aaron's Rod That Budded – This rod was originally the one that Moses used tending the sheep of Jethro. Moses had it at the burning bush (Exod. 4:2). He worked miracles and signs with it in the land of Egypt (Exod. 4:17). It is thought that Aaron received it when called to serve as priest. Both Moses and Aaron were of the House of Levi (Num.17:3). It was Aaron's rod of all the rods that alone “budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds” (Num. 17:8).

(c) The Tables of the Covenant – The first set of Ten Commandments were smashed to pieces when Moses came down from the mount and saw the idolatry and iniquity of the people (Exod. 32:19). When the second set of two tables were made and the ten commandments written upon them, they were placed in the ark of the covenant (Exod. 34:1,28; 40:20). They were a symbol of Christ Who could say without reserve, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8).

(d) The Cherubims of Glory – “And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat”. The Cherubim were of one piece with the mercy seat, and thus connected with the propitiatory work of Christ. The first time we meet them is at the entrance to the Garden of

Eden where they guard the entrance, lest Adam return to the Tree of Life and live forever (Gen. 3:24). In Ezek. 28:14 we read about “the anointed cherub that covereth”, but this one fell because of pride leading to rebellion against God.

(e) The Mercy-seat – The mercy-seat or the footstool of God was the propitiatory lid of the ark. Between the Law contained within and God above the ark, there was the mercy-seat. When this was sprinkled with blood it covered the sins of the people. It concealed from the Divine eye the Law which they violated.

2. ITS FUNCTION (6-10)

The chief lesson of the tabernacle and its ritual never seemed to enter the minds and hearts of the people. A God Who hid himself behind thick curtains; who forbade access into His presence except on the Day of Atonement; who divided the Holy Places into two compartments, and dwelt alone in the innermost one, out of reach of the people except the High Priest once a year, make it evident that the way to Him is not open and easy.

a. Into the First (The Holy Place) (6)

Every morning and every evening of the year, a priest entered the Holy Place to trim the lamps of the seven-branched lampstand, and to offer incense in the golden altar (Exod. 30:1-10). They also changed the showbread every Sabbath (Lev. 24:5-9).

b. Into the Second (The Holy of Holies) (7-10)

The author now gives his most attention to this inner sanctuary. Here the High Priest entered only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement (Lev. Ch. 16). He carefully prepared for the occasion by ceremonial washings and by donning of special garments.

He also took coals of fire from off the altar and put them in the censer, and poured incense on the coals, and then entered the Most Holy Place. The smoke from the censer made a screen over the mercy-seat

Blood from the bullock was brought in for himself, and blood from a slain goat was taken for the people; and they were sprinkled on the mercy-seat.

The author then proceeds to show (8-10) the negative character of the first tabernacle – “The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing” (8). His positive statement is found in 10:19-20.

All of these “gifts and sacrifices, ... stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation”. They were imperfect – “that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience”. Man being imperfect these sacrifices just made him more imperfect.

The word “imposed” means a “burden”. The Law was a “yoke which neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10). “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). So perfection can only come by Christ. These were imposed until the “time of reformation” or the time when perfection would come through the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

II. THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY (11)

“BUT CHRIST being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle”. “BUT CHRIST” – here we have both a dispensational and a doctrinal change. Christ changed both. “The time of reformation” under Christ promised a better hope, better promises, a better covenant, and now a better entrance into God’s presence, Romans 8:3 tells us that “the law ... was weak through the flesh”. In Christ all the shadows give way for the substance, the temporary for the permanent, the imperfect for the perfect. The “good things” are all the blessings promised in the New Covenant, made with Christ, and associated with the New Jerusalem.

The entire structure of the first tabernacle suggested restriction, imperfection, limitation, exclusion, and above all inadequacy. On the other hand the spiritual heavenly tabernacle made in Christ is one of open free access of worship, in which perfection and reality are found.

“The smoke of thine atonement here
Darkened the sun and rent the veil,
Made the new way to heaven appear,
And showed the great Invisible:
Well pleased in Thee, our God looks down
And calls His rebels to a crown”.

C. THE PERFECT REDEMPTION (8:6 – 10:18)

LESSON # 9 - THE BETTER SACRIFICE

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 9:12-18)

INTRODUCTION:

The key word to this Epistle is found in the word “BETTER”. It shows that Christ is the substance as over against all the shadows of the Old Economy. Christ is better than Angels, than Moses, than Aaron, than the Tabernacle, the Priesthood, and all the Sacrifices.

The first ten verses of this chapter set forth the facts of the earthly tabernacle with its offerings, and showing their incompleteness for the perfecting of the worshipper.

The remaining verses of this chapter set forth the ministry and mediatorship of Christ with reference to His sacrifice; His shed blood and its relationship to the New Covenant.

A summary description of Christ’s superior ministry is now set forth in verse twelve, and then amplified in the rest of the chapter.

(1) Christ is greater as to the ultimate place of His offering – “into the holies” – Heaven.

(2) Christ is greater as to the provision of His offering – “His own blood” shed on Calvary.

(3) Christ is greater as to the perfection of His offering – “entered once for all”.

Two main points will now come into sharp focus: (a) The entrance of this High Priest into the Heavenly tabernacle forever; (b) That entrance was made with His own blood. This is the bloodiest chapter in the N.T. The word blood (“haima” occurs twelve (12) times. So this chapter magnifies the blood of Christ, and the character of the redemption which was purchased thereby.

In setting forth Christ’s sacrifice the author continues to use the method of contrast – contrasting the old and the new in order to show that the old was only preparatory and inferior, whereas the new is perfect and superior.

“In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o’er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime”.

I. BECAUSE OF ITS CLEANSING POWER (12-14)

“... purifying of the flesh.” “... purge your conscience from dead works.”

1. Under the Old Covenant (12-13)

“... the blood of goats and calves, ... the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean”.

These sacrifices were of animal blood, which in itself is of limited value to that of man. They accomplished but a limited work – “sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh”.

These animal sacrifices could never remove sin; they simply covered for the time being. Anyone who was ceremonially defiled could not enter into the worship of the sanctuary. His defilement excluded him from the congregation.

Two of the great O.T. acts of cleansing are now set before us: Leviticus chapter 16, and Numbers chapter 19.

a. The Day of Redemption (Atonement) (Lev. Ch. 16)

The animals used are “two kids of the goats, one ram” and a “bullock”.

Aaron takes his bullock and offers it for a sin offering for himself and for his house. He takes the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkles it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat with his finger seven times.

Then Aaron takes the two goats and casts lots upon them – “one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat”. The sacrificial goat is then slain and its blood taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled as he did with the blood of the bullock. Also the tabernacle and the altar of sacrifice are cleansed. Then he takes the live goat and lays both his hands upon its head, confessing over it all the sins of the congregation; and then it is taken by a man into the wilderness, a place uninhabited. This is typical of the complete removal of sin.

Aaron then goes in and changes from his linen garments to his royal garments, comes out in glory and splendor to bless the people. So a complete redemption has been affected on this Day of Atonement.

b. The Acts of Restoration (Purification, Separation Num. Ch. 19)

The animal used here is “a red heifer” (a young unbred cow).

In this act a young heifer, red in color, is taken, wherein there is no blemish and upon which never yoke came. It is slain and its blood is sprinkled “before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times”. It is slain “without the camp”. The remaining carcass together with “cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet” are then burned without the camp. This is then mixed with water and becomes “water of separation: it is a purification for sin”.

The defilement which necessitated the application of this water and ashes is particularly connected with death. A person was rendered unclean by touching “a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave”.

The unclean person must be sprinkled with these ashes on the third day and on the seventh day. Then at evening on the seventh day he shall be clean again.

By these two acts of cleansing the congregation of Israel was to be kept clean under the Old Covenant. It was by a perpetual killing of animals and the application of blood, ashes and water.

2. Under the New Covenant (14)

“... by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ... How much more shall the blood of Christ, ... purge your conscience.

Here we get the great antitheses, the great contrast to all the blood of bulls, goats, calves, and heifers.

What kind of blood was Christ’s? It was the blood of a voluntary self-oblation – “I lay down my life” (John 10:17-18). It was the blood of an inwardly and outwardly perfect victim – perfect before both God and man – “Which of you convinceth me of sin” (John 8:46); “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). It was the blood of One who could reach man’s conscience and purify it. It purifies (a) a defiled conscience; (b) an evil conscience (10:22); (c) a conscience of sins.

It was the blood of Jesus Christ “through the eternal spirit” once for all. “He offered one sacrifice for sins forever”. “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:12; 10:14). It was the blood of a complete sacrifice – “sat down on the right hand of God from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool” (Heb. 10:12-13). The blood of Christ was untainted, pure blood, which could never be said of any man or animal.

The blood of Christ purges us “from dead works”. The sinner is “dead in sins”. So a dead man cannot perform good works before God. His dead works are his efforts to atone for his sin. All religious rites, ceremonies, sacraments, penance, Lenten sacrifices, and trying to be good are so many dead works in God’s sight.

Paul tells us in Romans 10:3-4: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”.

Not all the blood of beasts, on Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, Takes all our sins away,
A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.

Christ’s was a completed, not a repeated work on our behalf. The redemption of the Old Covenant was for one year, this was for evermore. If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer could cleanse and sanctify the flesh, how much more the blood of Christ the inner conscience of man. Christ’s work is spiritual not merely ceremonial. The conscience is cleansed, not merely the flesh. The greatest realities of the Christian life, from its commencement to culmination, are here set forth: Acceptance (Vr. 11); Access (Vr. 12); Acceptableness (Vr. 14); Activity (Vr. 14).

II. BECAUSE OF ITS CONFIRMING PURPOSE (15-22)

“And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament”.

If Christ had not come and taken upon Him sin, and become the sacrifice through His blood, there would have been no confirmation to the promises of the O.T.

1. For The Old Covenant

“...that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (15).

Under the Old Covenant men were guilty of transgressions for which the Old provided no redemption nor remission.

There were promises given under the old, promises of eternal inheritance; but there was no fulfillment of these promises. Hence no perfection under the old covenant. However, the old was sprinkled by blood and water, but it was only to the purifying of the flesh.

2. For The New Covenant

“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator” (Vr. 16).

It is the death of the testator that makes the will effective. This was true of both covenants or testaments.

Testaments in ancient times were ratified by means of sacrifices. When Jehovah wished to confirm His covenant with Abram five different animals were divided into halves, which were laid over against one another so that the contracting parties could pass in between them, thus indicating that they ratified the covenant (Gen. 15:8-21).

The sacrifice and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was retroactive in its effects. He was in God’s purpose “the Lamb slain from the foundation (overthrow) of the world” (Rev. 13:8). All who accepted the promises under the old were assured of the inheritance by God’s promise. It is the death of the testator, therefore, that makes the testament effective. This was true under

both covenants. For “without shedding of blood is no remission” (22). The shedding of blood speaks of death, and death is God’s judgment upon sin.

It was the will of God that provided us with this rich inheritance; it was the work of the Son who died for our sins that made the will valid; it is the Holy Spirit through His witness that leads us into the appropriation and enjoyment of all that God and Christ have done.

Many have been exercised about this word “testament” and say it should read “covenant”. They maintain it has no connection with a testament or Will and the death of the testator. But that is just the point – until God died in the person of Jesus Christ the old could not become available to the recipient. The blood of animals could not bring in the inheritance because they never made any promises. When God made a covenant or testament with Abraham, promising him and his seed a land, it could not be his until God died. Therefore Abraham and his seed could not inherit it all until Christ died; and when He did die they rejected Him and forfeited the land. Hence we must accept the death of the testator, Who also died on our behalf in order that the inheritance can become our inheritance.

Christ not only died to make the will effective, He arose to keep the Devil and his demons from robbing us of it.

During the war with Hitler, a Nazi soldier was captured. He was bleeding to death and needed an immediate blood transfusion. When the British soldier told him what was to be done, he said: “Whose blood will it be?” “British” was the reply. Then he flatly refused and died. So it was British blood or death.

For every sinner it is the precious blood of Christ or death.
Precious, precious blood of Jesus, Shed on Calvary,
Shed for rebels, shed for sinners, Shed for me.
Precious blood that hath redeemed us! All the price is paid;
Perfect pardon now is offered, Peace is made.

III. BECAUSE OF ITS CONCLUSIVE PROVISION (23-28)

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Vr. 28).

This closing paragraph in chapter nine offers two additional features in the pre-eminence of the new over the old. The sacrifice on which it rests is better (12-14); the covenant in which it this embodied is also seen as better (15-22); and now the service in Heaven and the second coming are both greater (23-28).

All things done under the Old Covenant were in the nature of a copy or symbolism and therefore animal blood could be used (23). “But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these”.

It is to be noted here that the heavenly things are set forth as the real things, whereas the things on earth were copies of the things in the heavens (24). The heavenly things, like things on earth, had been defiled too (Vr. 23). This defilement, no doubt, by him who is the first and greatest sinner, Satan, who has access to the heavens.

“But now once in the end of the ages hath He (Christ) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Vr. 26). When He entered heaven with His blood, He cleansed also the permanent things. This perfect sacrifice was made but “once” (Vrs.26,28). This “once” for all sacrifice of Christ entered heaven and cleansed the heavenly things; and like the High Priest who after the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat, put on his royal robes to come forth and bless the people. So Christ will come the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

1. In The Past

“He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Vr. 26)

In doing so He saved the sinner from the guilt and penalty of sin. This is a permanent, finished work. Sin must be dealt with and put away. Only God could do this in Christ (Isa. 43:25). This problem of sin was greater than the problem of health or wealth, position or place or power. Yet if sin is not put away, we are lost: “Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Sin brings many sorrows, shame, and suffering; but these are only the harbingers of the great payday – death and The Lake of Fire.

This took place “once in the end of the age”. Here is the great contrast between Aaron and Christ. All of the providential dealings of God with men in the past ages were preparatory to this great event; and from it has come every blessing now and in all the future.

Oh the love that drew salvation’s plan,
Oh the grace that brought it down to man,
Oh the mighty gulf that God did span,
At Calvary.

2. In The Present (Vrs. 23-24)

“...into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”.
There is a representative in Heaven (1 John 2:1-2).

a. To Purify The Heavenlies

“the heavens should be purified”. This reveals that even the heavens were defiled.
See Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:15-18.

b. To Pray for His Own

“to appear in the presence of God”. “to make intercession for them” (7:25).
As members of the Church, the Body of Christ we have not only an Advocate in the Heavenlies, but our Head.

3. In the Prospective

“He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation”.

When Israel will look and long for Him He shall appear unto them as their Savior. As He came the first time so must He come back the second time – “This same Jesus as ye saw him go into heaven shall so come in like manner” (Acts 1:11).

At His first advent there was no room in the inn; at His second the universe will make room for Him. At His first the reed of mockery, the purple garb of contempt, the cruel crown of thorns, the curse of the mob; but now the scepter of the universe, His brow crowned with many a diadem, panoplied with all the splendor of God, and tens of thousands following in His train.

C. THE PERFECT REDEMPTION (8:6 – 10:18)

LESSON # 10 - THE BETTER SALVATION

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 10:1-18)

INTRODUCTION:

Recapitulation of the argument – Our author must have understood what a writer meant when he said: “Repetition is the only figure of speech worth anything”. A successful advocate said: “The secret of winning a case was to go over your main points as many times as there are jurymen to be convinced”.

The sacrifices of the Law were ineffective to cleanse the conscience, as shown by their continual repetition (1-4). They were temporary. But the sacrifice of Christ is a sacrifice that accomplishes the will of God and sanctifies the people of the New Covenant (5-10). This sacrifice of Christ is efficacious and final because Christ is at God’s right hand. Unlike the Levitical priests, who continually stand to offer sacrifices, Christ made one perfect sacrifice and sat down, waiting the final triumph over all His foes (11-14). This finality of His sacrifice is also confirmed by the prophecy which foretells that under the New Covenant God remembers the people’s sins no more, because sin has been dealt with fully and finally forever (15-18).

The doctrinal teaching of the Epistle now reaches its close and climax with this passage. The priesthood of Christ, which includes His propitiatory sacrifice, is so effective that sins are not only covered, as under the Old Covenant, but actually put away under the New Covenant.

I. THROUGH THE WAY OF THE LAW (1-4)

The writer now enforces again the inefficiency and therefore inferiority of the Law and its ceremonial. It seems that the Holy Spirit with His insight into human nature and His foresight into human ways dealt in advance with man’s persistent tendency to maintain a religion with fixed rules, external accompaniments, routine prayers, with priests and sacrifices, a religion based upon Law and ritual. It is amazing that a religion of Law and ritual, tested by God for 1400 years and failed, should be repeated and imitated now for some 2000 years!

“It is no wonder at all that churches by Law established are a perpetual hindrance to the progress of truth and an injury to souls”. (G.H. Lang)

Jesus Christ is not only a perfect Man, but also a perfect Savior. The whole Aaronic priesthood was one of imperfection. God requires perfection. Psalm 18:30 says: “As for God His way is perfect”. Psalm 19:7 says: “The law of the Lord is perfect”. But where is the perfect man? We met Him in 2:9-10 as “The Captain of our salvation”. Thus imperfect men can find a perfect Savior, the perfect revelation of God to men, and the perfect representative of man to God. The perfections of Christ will be an eternal blessing and wonder – the Perfect Priest, Who offered a perfect sacrifice, entered a perfect sanctuary, to perform a perfect service, thereby bringing a perfect sanctification to man. What a spiritual delight for imperfect men to find in Christ a perfect Savior and Sanctifier.

1. The Law a Shadow Not The Substance (1)

The Law was but a shadow, not even an “image” of the better things to come. The Law was never a full and exact representation of things heavenly and future. The shadow of a man may give a fair idea of his form, but it can never be “the very image”. The Law with its continual sacrifice “year by year” could never make the worshipper “perfect”. It was Law and not grace. The Greek word for “perfect” is teleioo. The Law could not cause the worshipper to attain fully unto the goal or purpose (telos) of his approach to God.

Westcott says: “He who is teleios has reached the end which is in each case set before him; maturity of growth, complete development of powers, full enjoyment of privileges, perfect possession of knowledge”.

2. The Law involved Repetition, not Remission (2)

If the sacrifices under the Law had been sufficient there would have been no need of continual repetition. The continual repetition shows the inferiority of the legal system.

“He who is said to take a medicine every hour to keep life in him cannot be said to be cured” (Govett).

3. The Law Maintained a Consciousness of sins, not a Cleansing from Sins (2)

Under the Law there was always the recollection of sins, the recognition of guilt, the realization of what was really unforgiven. Forgiveness must be related to obliteration and oblivion – “sanctified ... once for all” (10:10).

4. The Law meant a Remembrance, not a Removal (3-4)

The animals used in the sacrifices were involuntary, not voluntary, they were non-moral instead of moral creatures, they were material not spiritual. Hence animal sacrifices were impotent to take away sins.

II. THROUGH THE WILL OF THE FATHER (5-10)

“to do thy will, O God” (7). “I come to do thy will, O God” (9). “By the which will we are sanctified” (10). The writer now quotes from Psalm 40:6-8.

1. As seen in The Preparation (5-6)

“...but a body hast thou prepared me” (A.V. and Septuagint). “...mine ears hast thou opened” (Ps. 40:6 – A.V.) “...ears hast thou digged for me” (Hebrew text).

Here is the great contrast between animal sacrifices which the priest took, and the body of Christ prepared for offering.

The statement in our text is taken from the Greek Version (LXX) of the O.T.. Ps. 40:6 reads in the Authorized Version – “mine ears hast thou opened”. The literal Hebrew says: “ears hast thou digged”.

The Hebrew means that God has opened the ears of His Servant to hear and obey His will. The literal Hebrew which reads: “ears hast thou digged for me” is no doubt based upon an act seen in Exod. 21:5-6, in which a servant, who has served his term of six years, wishes to remain with his master. In this event his ear is bored with an awl and he serves his master for life.

The LXX reading which says: “a body hast thou prepared me” may be due to an early corruption of the text, or it may just be a free translation of the sense. The original indicates that Christ’s sacrifice was a sacrifice of obedience, a voluntary and glad surrender of His life to God. The piercing of the ear lobe of the O.T. slave was equivalent to preparing the whole body for lifelong service. Thus the same of Christ. The essence of Christ’s sacrifice of Himself was His willingness to do what God required (See Isa. 50:5-6). So Christ became a true bond servant to the will of God, and offered His body a sacrifice for sin.

2. As Seen In The Principles (7-9)

“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (7) “He taketh away the first that He may establish the second” (9).

Obedience to the will of God is now the principle upon which this Servant works. The will of God is the permanent character of Jesus Christ.

Herein is seen the spiritual and moral quality of this sacrifice in contrast to the Levitical offerings. So the first principle is the will of God.

The second principle is expressed as follows: “He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second”. This is a universal principle or law of God; it is the second that is important. The Biblical examples are: Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph

and his brethren, The Old Covenant and the New Covenant, Law and Grace, the Flesh and the Spirit, the first and second births, and the present heavens and earth and the new heavens and earth.

God has “no pleasure” in the sacrifices offered under the Law because they could not do what He desired and purposed that a sacrifice should do (Vr. 8).

3. As Seen In The Purpose (10)

“... sanctified ... once for all”.

The word “sanctified” sets forth a complete dedication, a setting apart for God. It represents all that the types failed to achieve. It involves cleansing from all internal defilement, which was experienced externally by “divers washings” and “the ashes of an heifer” (9:10,13). This inner cleansing brought a family relationship, as well as access and assurance (2:11-13; 10:22).

Sanctification is God’s perfect will and perfect work in Christ for every sinner saved by grace. “By the which will ... through the offering of the body”. This means His will done – not only by His sinless life, but by His sacrificial life. This involved: Suffering (Heb. 9:26; 13:12); Crucifixion (Heb. 6:6; 12:2); Shedding of blood (Heb. 9:14; 10:19); Death (Heb. 2:9; 9:15); An Altar, Priest, and Sanctuary (Heb. 13:10; 8:1; 9:1; 10:19).

“O soul for thee salvation thus, by God is freely given;

The blood of Christ atones for sin, and makes us meet for heaven”.

III. THROUGH THE WORK OF THE SON (11-14)

1. In Contrast to the Old Covenant Priest (11)

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins”.

The Old Covenant Priest “Stood” (Deut. 10:8); Christ “sat down”. There was no seat in the Holy Place nor in the Most Holy Place, a reminder that sin was ever present and needed constantly to be covered. His work involved a daily ministry and he was always offering the same sacrifice which could not remove sin.

2. In the Consummation of the New Covenant Priest (12-14)

“But this man” or “But this One”. What a contrast we now have between these priests: Instead of many, Christ offered one sacrifice; Instead of oftentimes, Christ offered “once”; Instead of standing, Christ “sat down” after His accomplished work; Instead of imperfect, His was perfected for all time.

However, one element is still lacking in the perfection, experientially of this “one” offering, the “expecting till His enemies be made His footstool (Vr. 13; Ps. 110:1). All will not accept His work as is seen by statement “rule thou in the midst of thine enemies” (Vr. 2).

But His offering will perfect forever them that are sanctified.

“I hear the words of love, I gaze upon the blood,

I see the mighty sacrifice, And I have peace with God.

‘Tis everlasting peace, Sure as Jehovah’s name,

‘Tis steadfast as His stable throne, For evermore the same.

The clouds may go and come, And storms may sweep the sky,

This blood-sealed friendship changes not, The cross is ever nigh.

I change, He changes not, The Christ can never die,

His love, not mine, the resting place, His truth, not mine, the tie”.

IV. THROUGH THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT (15-18)

“Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us”.

1. By Revelation (15-16)

“... he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them”. The Holy Spirit is here quoting from Jeremiah 31:33-34, as also from Heb. 8:8-13. This shows that the Holy Spirit is the Author of the Word. He witnesses through the Word.

This witness is that the Lord will, under the New Covenant, “put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them”.

2. By Remembrance “No More” (17)

“And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”.

God has put man’s “sins and iniquities” into oblivion through Jesus Christ:

“As far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12).

“Cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).

“Cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa. 38:17).

The story is told of an old monk, who accosted Martin Luther and asked him: “Martin, dost thou believe in the forgiveness of sins?” “Yes, verily” said Martin. “Martin, Martin, dost thou believe in the forgiveness of THY sins? Dost thou believe in the forgiveness of thine OWN sins”?

“No more remembrance of sins”. What a glorious truth it is!

3. By Remission (18)

“No more offering for sin”

The remission is so complete; the work is so perfect, that there need never be another offering.

This indicates a perfect restoration of the sinner to God. The blood of Christ, the sacrifice of the Son of God, once and for all perfects them that are sanctified. If we doubt this fact, we cast a shadow on God’s Word, and the integrity of the work of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

The Creed of Christ:

1. Without Reservation – “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God”.

2. Within Revelation – “In the volume of the Book it is written of me”.

3. With all Restoration – “By one offering ... perfected forever them that are sanctified”.

“Arise, my soul, arise! Shake off thy guilty fears;

The bleeding sacrifice, In my behalf appears;

Before the throne, my surety stands, My name is written in His hands.

He ever lives above, For me to intercede.

His all-redeeming love, His precious blood to plead;

With confidence I now draw nigh, And ‘Father, Abba, Father’ cry”.

D. THE PERFECT RESPONSE (10:19 - 13:21)

LESSON # 11 - INTRODUCTION TO BETTER LIFE OF FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 10:19-25)

INTRODUCTION:

The Doctrinal Section of this Epistle is now ended, and we come to the practical. The author has established his doctrinal view of the relation of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant, as its complete fulfillment: the substance answering to the shadow, the perfect to the imperfect. So he now comes to the practical consequences of his conclusions.

“Other things being equal, it will be found that the finest moral and spiritual fruit grows on the tree of sound doctrine. The practical qualities of faith, hope, and love will follow a sound doctrine”. (John C. Page – Bringing Many Sons Unto Glory, pg. 112)

This threefold appeal to “faith, hope, and love” in this section as well as in other sections is a Pauline concept of truth (see 1 Thess. Ch. 1:3; 1 Cor. 13:13). This threefold truth will be fully developed in chapters 11 to 13. (Note also 6:10-12).

The subject of this section was begun back at 4:14-16. The writer’s argument is that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ had done what no other sacrifice has or could do – opened the way into God’s presence for the believer. There can now be unrestricted fellowship because of Christ and the Cross.

Grace must have appropriation if it is to be operative. There is a French phrase which fits our text – “Noblesse oblige”- Nobility obligates. It denotes the obligation of honorable and generous behavior associated with high rank or birth. It is not that I have to do it (LAW); but I want to do it (GRACE).

The truth of these verses can be summarized as follows: (1) What we have (19-21); What we hold (22-23); What we herald (24-25).

I. THE BASIC FACTS (19-21)

“Having boldness to enter into the holiest” (19). “Having an High Priest over the house of God” (21).

The threefold appeal which we have in verses 22-25 are now based upon these basic facts.

“to enter into” is the word eisodus. In Luke 9:31 we have the exodus of our Lord, translated “decease”.

1. A Present Approach (19-20)

The word “having” indicates a present experience. There are present tenses in the Christian life. The word “boldness” denotes “outspokenness, or access without restraint”. Under the Law entrance was restricted to the High Priest, and then only on the Day of Atonement – “the High Priest alone” (9:7); and “with the blood of others” (9:25). But the case is now different.

At Sinai the people stood afar off by Divine appointment. Only the chosen representative could draw near to God. The idea of distance pervades the whole Mosaic economy. The holiness of God and the nature of sin forbade the access to God - “Your sins have separated between you and your God” (Isa. 59:2). “Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13).

This is not the boldness of presumption or of ignorance or of recklessness; but a boldness that recognizes the holiness of God, that admits His righteousness, believes in His gracious provision and rejoices in His righteous salvation.

The approach is by “the blood of Jesus, ... through the veil, that is to say, His flesh”. The veil is likened unto His flesh. It was the veil in the temple that was rent in two from the top to the bottom when Christ died (Matt. 27:51). So by the shed blood of Christ there is access to the presence of God.

This was also then a “new and living way”. This refers to the way newly opened by the New Covenant of God’s free grace in Christ. The word prosphates, translated “new” means literally “freshly slain”. It was therefore the death of Christ that made this way a living way. The legal way was old (8:13). To try and enter in by the old could only mean death; except for the High Priest once a year who entered in by blood. So Christ newly come from the cross is the living way to God.

“No more veil! God bids me enter by the new and living way –
Not in trembling hope I venture, boldly I his call obey;
There, with Him, my God, I meet God upon the mercy-seat!
In the robes of spotless whiteness, with the blood of priceless worth,
He has gone into that brightness, Christ, rejected from the earth –
Christ accepted there on high, and in Him do I draw nigh”.

2. A Perpetual Approach (21)

“Having an High Priest over the house of God”.

The High Priest, Christ Jesus, “ever liveth to make intercession”. He is a seated Priest in a Heavenly Sanctuary. The original says: “a great priest”. This indicates that He is both King and Priest, as Melchizedek.

So upon these two basic facts we can now proceed and see the fruits based upon these facts.

II. THE BLESSED FRUITS (22-25)

Three times now we have the words “let us” and each time they deal with one of the great Christian graces – FAITH, HOPE, LOVE.

1. The First Appeal (22) Exercise of Faith

“Let us draw near”. To draw near expresses the full privilege of those who are sanctified. It is a word used only in one other Epistle (1 Tim. 6:3). It is used 7 times in Hebrews – 4:14-16; 7:25; 10:1; 10:19-23; 11:6; 12:18; 12:22.

“With a true heart”. This is a heart imbued with truth. It is not a matter of emotion or disposition or mood. The heart is delivered from the power of fear and doubt by faith and truth.

“in full assurance of faith”. When our hearts are imbued with the truth, then it becomes easy to come in the fullness of faith. This inward attitude is made possible for two reasons:

“having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” and “our bodies washed with pure water”.

These are symbols of cleansing, sanctification, and dedication. The word “evil” might better be translated “accusing”. The heart finds its refuge from an accusing conscience at Calvary. Our conscience accuses the heart of sin.

The figures of “sprinkled” and “washed” are taken from the circumstances of the consecration of the priests and people. Sprinkling refers to the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean, cleansing the conscience from all dead works, made possible by the death of Christ,

typified in the dead animal (Num. Ch. 19). See 9:13-14. The washing with pure water refers to the spiritual reality set forth in the typical “divers washings” of the Law (9:10). It refers to the Laver in the outer court of the Tabernacle, and to the baths in the Temple. Paul speaks of “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5); also of “the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:26). These exercises are not to be repeated for both verbs are in the perfect participle, passive voice – “having been sprinkled, and having been washed”. We are to accept the finished work of Christ, both for redemption and sanctification, by faith. It can come in no other way.

2. The Second Appeal (23) Exercise of Hope

“Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering; for he is faithful that promised”.

The word “faith” in this verse is the word “hope”. It is elpidos in the original, and should be so translated. This refers to that better hope which comes in the New Covenant. It is to be held without wavering, or bending (See 9:28).

Much is made of the promises and the faithfulness of Him that promised in this Epistle. God never changes His mind after He has promised. He is called the “God of truth” or “faithfulness” (Isa. 65:16). We must “hold fast the confession of our faith” or better “hope”. We must recognize what we have in Christ and then it becomes easy to “hold fast our confession”.

3. The Third Appeal (24-25) Exercise of Love

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”.

There is a logical sequence in the order of the threefold appeal – Faith leads to Hope, and Hope leads to love.

“Consider” is katanoeo – the tense is the present continuous, indicating a practice.

“Provoke” is paroxysmos – denoting a stimulation and only used here in the N.T. This is an intense word and means to fire up others to love and good works. This is the only Christian enthusiasm allowable in the N.T. to literally exasperate our fellow Christians in the sense of provoking or inciting them to “love and to good works”.

The encouragement to the saints is never far removed from “the assembling of ourselves together”. With sainthood comes also the social side of the Christian life – the communion of the saints. The word “saint” never occurs in the singular. There was a real purpose in encouraging one another and maintaining real fellowship – “as ye see the day approaching”.

What day is this? The Hebrews familiar with their O.T. knew the day that Paul was talking about – Isa. 2:12; Amos 5:18; Joel 1:15. This is the day when the proud and lofty will be humbled; a day of darkness and not light; a day of destruction from the Almighty; and yet at evening it shall be light (Isa. 12:4-6; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 13:1-2; 14:7).

As members today of the Church, the Body of Christ, we are not looking for “The Day of the Lord”. We are looking for the Lord Himself to be manifested in glory (Phil 3:20-21; Col. 3:4; Tit. 2:13).

This lesson is giving exhortations, which will be more fully expounded later, to FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE. We are to draw near in faith, hold fast the hope, and provoke to love.

D. THE PERFECT RESPONSE (10:19 – 13:21)

LESSON # 12 - WILLFUL SINNING LEADS TO PERDITION

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 10:26-39)

INTRODUCTION:

“The day approaching” (10:25) leads us now to the fourth and final warning of this book. The author has three times before stopped in the progress of his message to insert an interlude of warning:

- (1) In 2:1-4 we saw that neglect led to drifting.
- (2) In 3:7-19 we saw that hardening of the heart led to unbelief.
- (3) In 6:1-12 we saw that immaturity lead to apostasy.
- (4) In 10:26-31 we shall now see that apostasy leads to perdition.

The “day” mentioned in verse 25 is “The Day of the Lord”. Under the pressure of persecution and material loss there came the temptation to turn back to Moses and the Old Levitical System.

The key works of this book are Perfection and Perdition.

To rightly understand this book in the light of these words it is of utmost importance to remember that the Old Covenant had been completely fulfilled in Christ’s finished work. The temple was still standing but the Glory of the Lord had left the Holy of Holies. The New Covenant was now being presented.

“Let us draw near” (10:22) to the full perfection of the New Covenant. “But if any man draw back” (10:38) to the Old Covenant he will meet with perdition.

It may be well to refresh our minds as to the historical experiences of Israel, and see again the types of the wilderness journey. Israel was saved out of Egypt by the Passover Lamb and Blood. They had now come to Mt. Sinai for a stay of about a year. Here they received the Ten Commandments, the Tabernacle with its Ritual, and the Levitical Priesthood. Then they resume their journey to Canaan via Kadesh-Barnea. Coming to Kadesh we find the following record:

Num. 11:1 – Murmuring and complaining brought “the fire of the Lord ... among them” (Taberah).

Num. 11:4ff – Lusting for the food of Egypt; then the Lord gave them quails from the sea, but He also sent them a plague (“Kibroth-hattaavah”).

Num. 14:2 – Murmuring again led to the spies and the rejection of the minority report. This led to the thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness.

This is the historical record that forms the background of this book of Hebrews.

In their spiritual experience it is evident that these Hebrews were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ:

(1) “Received the knowledge of the truth”. “Knowledge” here is the word Epignosis, a genuine intelligent apprehension and appropriation of the truth.

(2) “The blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified”. The blood had been applied by faith to the setting apart and purifying of the life.

I. WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY (26-31)

Years ago while travelling through the Rocky Mountains on the railroad, viewing the beautiful and breath-taking scenery, one is suddenly plunged into total blackness as the train passes through one of those long mountain tunnels. In the early days there were no “lights on”

for such dark moments. This Epistle is something like that. It presents some of the most wonderful panoramas of spiritual truth concerning the glory of Christ; and then suddenly without warning one is plunged into the dark revelation of the warning of judgment.

1. The Possibility of Apostasy (26)

The sin spoken of here is a willful sin. The word for “willfully” is hekousios meaning voluntary of one’s own accord. It is the opposite of sins committed inconsiderably, or from ignorance, or from weakness. The word for “knowledge” is Epignosis, and means an experiential understanding of the truth.

Christ died once for all. There was no repetition of the Passover as it was first administered in Egypt. Every passover that followed was but a memorial of the first (See Exod. 12:14). When the Israelites came to Kadesh-barnea there was no other. The sin spoken of here seems to be like the presumptuous sin of Israel when they tried to enter Canaan after God forbid them (Num 14:44; 15:30; Ps. 19:13).

2. The Prospect of Apostasy (27)

Nothing but “fearful judgment” and “fiery indignation” waits the one who fails to go on to perfection as it is in Christ.

He who has come into the knowledge and experience of the New Covenant and then willfully renounces it for the Old Covenant makes himself an adversary.

“They shall not be lost, but they shall experience divine anger marked by fire” – Robertson.

This Epistle may be summed up in two phrases:

“Let us go on to perfection” (6:1).

“Draw back unto perdition” (10:39).

Everything in this Epistle contributes to this dual theme. Christ is set forth as being better than Angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and all the ritual of Israel’s elaborate religion and priesthood in order that these Hebrew believers may press on to perfection in Christ. In order to do this one must leave behind all the shadows, and symbols that could never make anyone perfect.

The examples of those that draw back to perdition are those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness” (3:17); those who are dull of hearing and never advance from mere babyhood (5:11-13); or prefer Sinai to Zion (12:18-24).

Here the alternatives and contrasts are set forth: Shadow and the Very Image; Figure and the True; Worldly sanctuary and Heavenly Holiest of all; The Old Covenant and the New Covenant; Flesh cleansed and Conscience cleansed; Mount Sinai and Mount Zion; and the Vanishing and the Remaining.

What is meant by Perfection and Perdition?

Phil. 3:15-19 – “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded ... walk ... for many walk ... whose end is perdition ... who mind earthly things”.

Here as many as would be perfect are exhorted positively to follow the example of Paul; and negatively to avoid the example of those whose end is perdition.

Matt. Chs. 5-7 – “be ye therefore perfect ... Broad is the way that leadeth to perdition” (Matt. 5:48; 7:13). Here the exhortation is to suffer and endure with a view of the Kingdom in mind.

Matt. 26:7-8 – “There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment ... to what purpose is this waste” (Greek – perdition).

Perfection – coming from the Greek word teleios means the end as a goal. To go on to perfection is to reach the goal. Two passages will show this: Phil. 3:12; Gal. 3:3.

Perdition – set over against perfection means to end in waste. Therein lies the tragedy of drawing back. One may himself be saved, but he may suffer a fiery loss – one’s life work turned to smoke and ashes (1 Cor. Ch. 3). “Wasted in the wilderness” is the typical example (Num. 14:33).

3. The Principle of Apostasy (28-29)

Under the Law or the Old Covenant, one who despised the Law died without mercy after the evidence of two or three witnesses (28).

Under the New Covenant the sin is so much greater and likewise the judgment (Note the case of Ananias and Sapphira Acts 5:1-11). They did “despite unto the Spirit of grace”.

Here is a rejection of the Trinity: (1) God the Father – “trodden under foot the Son of God”; (2) The Son – “blood of the covenant, ... an unholy thing”; (3) The Holy Spirit – “despite unto the Spirit of grace”.

The words “trodden under foot” is katapateo, expresses an act of the utmost contempt and scorn. To return to the Old Covenant was to count “the blood of the covenant, an unholy thing”. “Unholy” is koinos, meaning common, having no cleansing value. The blood of Christ was no more than that of a criminal, executed for his own crime.

4. The Proof of Apostasy (30-31)

The O.T. revelation of God in judgment is clear – (see Deut. 32:35-36; Ps. 135:14; Rom. 12:19).

The New Covenant does in no way modify in the slightest degree the character of God as Holy, Righteous, Just and True.

It is always “a fearful thing” for a rejecter “to fall into the hands of the living God”. In this Dispensation of the Grace of God the judgment does not come immediately as under the Old and New Covenants; but willful rejecters will ultimately be punished.

II. WORDS OF ADMONITION (32-39)

As in chapter six, so here, the warning is followed by the word of cheer and encouragement. Their past should fortify them for the present and the future.

1. By Way of Remembrance (32-34)

“But call to remembrance the former days”.

a. “Ye were illuminated” (See 6:4); They were “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1).

b. “Ye endured a great fight of afflictions”. The word “fight” is athlesis, only used here in the N.T. It means a “contest of athletes; hence a conflict”.

c. “Ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions”. “Gazing-stock” is theatrizo and means “to be exposed in the theatre by way of shame and horrible treatment”. “Reproaches” is oneidismos, meaning contemptuous defamation. “Affliction” is thlipsis, meaning pressure, that which weighs down the spirit.

d. “Ye became companions of them so used”. They were in this conflict with others so used, common sharers in their sufferings.

e. “Ye had compassion of me in my bonds”. Some manuscripts read instead of “in my bonds”, “with prisoners”. Whichever may be the correct reading it indicates that they were compassionate with other sufferers.

f. “Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods”. They accepted this willingly, This was an evidence of genuine faith.

g. “Ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance”. This is the ninth time that the word “better” (kreisson) is used in Hebrews. There are 13 occurrences of this word in the book.

They had begun well by enduring afflictions, being reproached, made a gazing-stock, losing their goods; but looking above for a better substance.

2. By Way of Reward (35-37)

“...Confidence which hath great recompense of reward”.

“...After ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”. “He shall come, and not tarry”.

They were not to let go of their boldness and to exercise patience in view of the Second Coming of Christ.

Patience may be either active as in perseverance in well-doing (Rom. 2:7); or fruit bearing (Luke 8:15); or running the appointed race (Heb. 12:1); or passive as in endurance in trials (Jas. 1:12); or under chastisement (Heb. 12:5-7). Patience perfects our Christian character.

Confidence leads to patience and patience leads to the fulfillment of the reward.

3. By Way of Redeeming Faith (38-39)

“the just shall live by faith”.

“believe to the saving of the soul”.

The writer now quotes from Hab. 2:3-4. This clause is quoted three times in the N.T. In each case there is a little different emphasis upon certain words in the clause.

Romans 1:17 – “The J U S T shall live by faith”. In his letter to the Romans Paul is going to set forth the truth of justification by faith as illustrated in Abraham before he was circumcised.

Galatians 3:11 – “The just shall L I V E by faith”. The Galatians had been justified by faith but were tempted to live by Law. So here there are the emphases upon a life of faith.

Hebrews 10:38 – “The just shall live by F A I T H”. Paul is going to move into that great chapter of the heroes of faith and so he now emphasizes the matter of faith

“the saving of the soul” as presented here is by losing it, by denying it, and by pressing on to perfection (Matt. 16:24-27).

“But we are not of them who draw back into perdition”. Drawing back in a believer’s life is due sometimes to disappointments, at other times to depression, and again to discouragement; but always to distrust.

This exhortation and warning does not raise the question of eternal salvation, but the question of rewards; a solemn truth.

“The just shall live by faith”. We are not to live by ceremonies, ordinances, or any legal works. God has no delight in those who shrink back from faith. Such shrinking dishonors Him, His Son, the Cross, and His Grace and Glory.

“He that shall come will come, and will not tarry”. “God is never before His time, and never is behind”.

D. THE PERFECT RESPONSE (10:19 – 13:21)

LESSON # 13 - EXAMPLES OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 11:1-40)

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter is one of the most outstanding in the whole Bible. Spurgeon called it: “The Arc de Triomphe” – the Arch of Triumph. It deals with the subject of faith. The believer is called to “stand fast in the faith” (1 Cor. 16:13); “draw near to God in faith” (Heb. 10:22); to “walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7); and to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Jesus said to His disciples: “Have faith in God” (Mk. 11:22). This is the way of victory for the believer (1 Jn. 5:4).

“The just shall live by faith”. This statement is known as: “The watchword of the reformation”. Luther, the reformer, got it from Paul and Paul in turn from the prophet Habakkuk. W.Y Fullerton of London calls the ancient prophet: “Great-grandfather of the reformation; Paul the grandfather; and Luther the father”.

Faith is more than a theological maxim; it is a principle of life. So it was in the heart of the prophet who first received it from God, wrote it down for Paul, for Luther, and for us. The prophet lived in a dark and crucial period; but before he lays down his prophetic quill sings the song of triumph over all his adversaries Hab.3:17-19. So in this Book of Hebrews, the reformation text is still a working principle of life. It is not simply telling us that a man enters into life by an act of faith; but goes on to live on the faith principle. This eleventh chapter of Hebrews amplifies and elucidates the closing words of chapter ten, indicating that faith is the continuing and controlling principle of life. “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord” – the initial act of faith, the commencement of faith: “so be walking in Him” – the continuing principle (Col. 2:6). In chapter 10:22-25 we were given the three principles of faith, hope and love. These are now taken up in turn: Chapter 11 with Faith; chapter 12 with Hope; and chapter 13 with Love.

This chapter presents two main divisions: (1) Faith’s Declaration (1-3); and (2) Faith’s Demonstration (4-40).

I. FAITH’S DECLARATION (1-3)

While faith has great reality with it; it is one of those principles hard to define. Many have been the attempts at definition:

“Trusting God in the dark” – General Booth.

“Faith is believing the Word of God to the extent of acting upon it” – Dwight L. Moody.

“It makes promises present and real and unseen things visible” – William’s Commentary.

“It assumes that to be truth which it expects to become fact in the future” – Knock.

Faith is not a dispensational word like “Church”, “Body”, “Bride”, “Mystery” or “New Man”. It is a principle of tremendous force in any dispensation.

1. It is a Foundation (1a)

“Now faith is the foundation of things hoped for”. The word used in the A.V. is “substance”; and in the R.V. “assurance”. The Greek word is hypostasis – a setting or placing underneath. It comes from hypo “under or underneath”; and stasis “a stationing or placing”. Hence that which is placed underneath. The word occurs five times in the N.T. (2 Cor. 9:4; 11:17; Heb. 1:3; 3:14; 11:1).

Because it is the foundation it becomes an assurance: “things hoped for” and has the idea of an unborn embryo. As the mother prepares the things needed for her unborn child, so faith is the assurance or foundation of things hoped for.

In ancient papyri in Apostolic times this word was used for “title deeds” just as a deed guarantees ownership of a plot of real estate; so faith is a firm assurance of things hoped for. We all hope for many things, but the question is, what foundation or ground have we for our hope? What are our title deeds? Everything depends upon this.

As to our hope for the future it all rests upon the faithfulness of God’s promise. If there be no God or if His promise cannot be fulfilled, then we have no foundation, and our faith is in vain.

“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). “Abraham believed God” (Gen. 15:6).

2. It is a Conviction (1b)

“the evidence of things not seen”.

The word for “evidence” is elengchos. This word occurs twice in the N.T.: here and 2 Tim. 3:16 where it is translated “reproof”. It has the meaning of “evidence, proof, test, conviction”. It is used in the Greek Version (LXX) of the O.T. for the Hebrew word yakah, and is translated “reprove, rebuke, punish, and blame. It is connected in other O.T. passages with correction and chastisement (Job 5:17; Prov. 3:11-12. The latter is quoted in Heb. 12:5-6.

It is a conviction such as is produced by an axiom in Euclid, or the demonstration of a problem. It is used by Aristotle of a syllogism in Rhetoric and of an axiom in geometry. Of this letter he says: “Elengchos or demonstration is that which cannot be otherwise, but is so as we assert”. The word is used of that which is clear proof of another fact. God has spoken. Are we convicted that His Word is sure and steadfast?

Faith for these Hebrews does two things: it looks forward to future glory; and endures present suffering. It may be relatively easy to rejoice and believe in Enoch’s translation; but would they so readily accept and rejoice in Abel’s death? They may easily rejoice in Noah’s preservation, but how about Abraham offering his son? They all died not having received the promise.

3. It is an Attestation (2)

“For by it the elders obtained a good report”.

God now gives testimony to the faith of the elders, called “a cloud of witnesses” in 12:1. God gives His presence, His power, and His pleasure to them because of their faith.

When God rewards it is always upon this basis. Faith leads to true works. Therefore works without faith is dead. Faith accepts and then acts. If we believe God, we will act accordingly.

These elders were men and women of trust in God and hence were true witnesses. The word translated “good report” is in the original “marturon” from which we get our word martyr – one who witnesses with life. They were not merely spectators (epoptes) only.

They perceived God’s purpose. They say by their faith that God has a Divine plan for them. Paul tells us of God’s “purpose of the ages” (Eph. 3:11). Lot saw a temporary well-watered plain. He was a man of sight, not faith. Abraham saw the future city of God. He was a man of faith.

They perceived God’s power. They recognized God’s attribute of power, of omnipotence. Thus with their God all things were possible.

4. It is a Manifestation (3)

This verse cannot be understood aright unless we have a better translation of the word “aionas” here translated “worlds”. This word has proved to be a problem for most Bible translators. There is only one world; here the word is plural. One Bible expositor says that it includes “the time worlds as well as the physical worlds” and adds nothing but confusion to confusion.

There are four Greek words rendered by the one word “world” in Scripture: Kosmos, or the created world; Ge, or ploughed, trodden earth; oikoumene, or inhabited world; and aion, or age. It is the latter which is used here.

Here we get a true picture of the philosophy of history. It is the course of events as seen in the changing dispensations within the framework of the ages or God’s time periods.

Sight reckons by appearance. Sight explains all things upon a materialistic basis. This is the logic of the world. They base their conclusions upon things that appear. It is like the poet has said: “The worldly hope men set their hearts upon turns ashes, or it prospers; and anon, like snow upon the desert’s dusty face lighting a little hour or two, is gone.

Faith reckons with the unseen. The principle of faith always acts on the certainty of God and the truth of His word. “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). The real is the unseen, the eternal. Faith is thus the opposite of sight.

We are now to see the Fathers of Faith. God’s infinite wisdom has caused the chronological order to coincide with the experiential order.

“So on I go, not knowing –
I would not if I might;
I’d rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light,
I’d rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight.”

I. FAITH’S DEMONSTRATION (4-40)

Mr. Chas Welch draws an analogy from nature as an illustration of this chapter. The sun represents Christ, the Perfector of Faith; the prism of glass represents faith; and the spectrum or rainbow contains bands of seven colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. The light of the sun untinted by the atmosphere through which it comes is pure white. Then if falling rain or mist intercepts this light we have formed a rainbow. This pure white light is made up of three primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. The uniting of these form the secondaries of orange, green, violet, and indigo. These seven colors are always seen in the following order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. All color in nature is dependent upon the fact that sunlight contains in itself the whole range of color that exists. The red rose is called red because the petals have the power of absorbing the blue and yellow rays of light, and throw back to our eyes the red. A leaf is green because it lays hold upon the red rays and throws back the blue and yellow. A white chalk cliff throws back all the rays. A black suit retains all the rays; hence white is cooler than black.

In this wonderful chapter we have three sets of seven, making double perfect numbers, three and seven. In verses 4 thru 12 we have Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. Verses 13 thru 16 speak of the pilgrim character of faith. In verses 17 thru 31 we have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Israel, and Rahab. We notice that a woman ends both of these series. Then from 32 thru 40 we have the third set that presents the spectrum – Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the Prophets.

Chapter 12:24 sets the principle of interpretation for this chapter: “And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”. Here in Chapter 11 we have the types; Christ alone represents the “better things”. Christ’s blood is better than Abel’s lamb; His walk is better than Enoch’s walk, etc. etc.

“Each sees one color of the rainbow light,
Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven,
Thou art the fullness of our partial sight,
We are not perfect till we find the seven.”

1. ABEL'S FAITH: (11:4; Gen. 4:1-8) Abel means "vanity"

Two men are at worship. In their acts of worship great issues are forming. The whole human race is being divided into two great streams – the one coming up to God; while the other goes down to darkness and doom. The one worships with an acceptable offering; the other without the acceptable offering.

The story of Cain and Abel, their altars, their sacrifices, and the results is a question of faith and unbelief. Both Cain and Abel heard from God, either directly or from Adam their father, for whom God killed animals and made coverings for their bodies. "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" Rom. 10:17. There can be no acceptable worship of God that does not reject every other means and looks to Christ and the cross (John 14:6; Eph. 2:13).

"...in process of time" (Gen. 4:3) should read: "at the end of days". This may refer to the seventh day or sabbath; or it may refer to the end of a season, such as harvest.

Two words are to be noticed and rightly interpreted that give light on the offerings of Cain and Abel. Of Abel's offering, we read: "And Abel, he also brought of the firstling of his flock and of the fat thereof". It could better read: "And Abel, he brought also of the firstlings of his flock". This indicates that Abel brought a bloodless gift as well as Cain; but that he also brought a lamb which alone could make any offering acceptable. This is the teaching of the book of Hebrews, namely that a bloodless sacrifice is acceptable only after the blood of Christ (See 13:15). The other word is "excellent" in Heb. 11:4, which word is not in the original. It should read: "By faith more sacrifice Abel than Cain offered to God". This coincides with what we have just said about the "also" of Gen. 4:4.

Cain, Korah, and Balaam make up a terrible trio that fitly prefigures the state of things at the time of the end (Jude 11). The hymnology of Cain's successors harps upon the strings: "Something in my hand I bring"; while faith says: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling".

"The sprinkling of blood that speaketh better things than Abel" (Heb. 12:24). Faith is made the condition of coming back to God, because unbelief was the cause of the Fall.

2. ENOCH'S FAITH: (11:5-6; Gen. 5:22-24; Jude 14-15)

All doctrine and practice may be summed up under two federal heads: ADAM and CHRIST. Each successive witness in Hebrews ch. 11 reverses the action of Adam. Adam's refuge in the covering of fig leaves is reversed in Abel's covering in the atonement of sacrifice and blood. Adam's sin spoiled his fellowship and walk with God; he hid himself in fear in the garden. On the other hand, Enoch walked with God openly and in faith. Adam's sin involved his house in death and his heritage in a curse: Noah built an ark by faith, saved his house, and became heir of righteousness.

The name Enoch means "initiated". There is a very definite mark of perfection stamped upon Enoch, a mark of termination. He was "the seventh from Adam" (Jude 14), and walked with God 300 yrs. His son's name is Methuselah which means "in his age it shall be". And when he died the flood came. The seventh in the line of Cain was Lamech, a murderer, polygamist, and worshipper of the god of forces (Gen. 4:23). But the seventh in the line of Seth was Enoch, a man of whom it is written that he "walked with God" and "he pleased God" and "was translated that he should not see death".

There are three outstanding features of his life:

(1) The brief description given – the record of his life is given in three passages and in seven verses. There is also an apocryphal book by his name and Ecclesiasticus mentions his name. One might think that such a man would have a long description given of his life.

(2) The short life he lived – he lived only 365 years. His father Jared lived 962 years and his son lived 969 years (Methuselah) and his grandson Lamech 777 years.

(3) The individual life he lived – of him it says “he walked with God” and this in the midst of a very wicked age. He was like a pure white lily in a very murky, scummy pond.

Enoch walked with God and thus pleased God. To walk with God implies (1) Understanding. He was in agreement with God. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3); (2) Fellowship. It means a community of interest, activity, feeling and partnership. In walking with God one must recognize who and what God is: “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). This is the very essence of His nature. Hence we cannot walk with God without the Spirit of God. “God is light” (1 John 1:5); Hence we are to “walk in light” (Eph. 5:8); “God is love” (1 John 4:16); hence we are to “walk in love” (Eph. 4:2). God is truth (1 John 5:20); hence we are to “walk in truth” (2 John 4).

Three times in Heb. 11:5 we are told that “By faith Enoch was translated”. This meant that he did “not see death”, he “was not found”, and “he pleased God”. The opposite of this is seen in another situation. In 1 Cor. 10:5 we read concerning Israel in the wilderness: “But with many of them God was not well-pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness”. Unbelief led to death; faith led to life. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him” (11:6). The faith of Enoch had two ingredients: “must believe that He is” and “that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”.

The walk of faith with God is always the path to glory. The obituary of Enoch is seen in the statement: “Before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God”.

Our dispensation of Grace is soon to end. Our disposition should be to walk and witness by faith. Our destination should always be our objective.

In the apocryphal book, The Wisdom of Solomon, the wise King is reputed to have said: “For honorable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. He pleased God, and was beloved of Him; so that living among sinners he was translated. Yea, speedily was he taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. ... He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time”. Wisdom of Solomon 4:8-11,13).

3. NOAH’S FAITH: (11:7; Genesis Chs. 6-9)

Noah was not only a man of faith; he was one who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). He was also “a just man and perfect in his generations, and walked with God” (6:9). He was also a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5).

Noah follows Enoch and Abel, not merely historically and chronologically, but also experientially. Abel represents true worship, and Enoch a true walk with God. Before Noah could be a true witness for God, he had both a true walk and worship.

“In Abel we see how faith makes death the path of life. In Enoch, how faith conquers death. In Noah how faith saves others from death by the work it does for them” – Andrew Murray.

In both Abel and Enoch death was involved in their faith; Abel died because of his faith, while Enoch escaped death because of his faith. In Noah and also Abraham we have special reference to “inheritance”.

Noah believed God concerning the coming of judgment; he also believed God concerning provision for salvation.

a. As Seen in God’s Revelation

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet” (11:7). “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

The word translated “warned” is chrematizo meaning “to warn”. It is used to indicate a warning given by means of a dream (Matt. 2:12-22); by the Holy Spirit (Luke 2:26); and by an angel (Acts 10:22). This warning is connected with the Book of Hebrews in the revelations mentioned in 8:5 and 12:25. Noah was warned of things that he had neither seen nor ever experienced. This puts faith to the final test. There was no other way by which Noah could

have knowledge of the impending deluge. Noah saw the terrible upheaval, the terrible destruction by means of the Flood 120 years before it took place.

b. As Seen in Noah's Preparation

“moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house”.

The word “fear” can be translated from three Greek words: (1) phobos “a fear that flees”, or (2) deilos “a fear that shrinks”, or (3) eulabes “a fear that worships”, “Godly fear”. It is the last one that is used here. Noah had neither that fear which flees nor draws back unto perdition; but that believes God and goes on to perfection in faith.

Godly fear, much despised by the world, is a great impetus for our faith. Because of this Noah's faith built an ark on dry land far from any water. This would seem insane in the eyes of the world.

If we believe God concerning wrath to come, shall we not flee to the only refuge provided. If we say that we believe God, and refuse to act accordingly, we really deny Him. Noah is an example of faith-obedience.

c. As Seen in Noah's Condemnation

“by the which he condemned the world”. “Noah ... a preacher of righteousness”.

If we live by faith we condemn thereby the one who lives by sight. If we live by the truth, we condemn the one who lives by the lie. If we live by honesty we condemn the one who lives by cheating and stealing.

Noah preached the righteousness of God in judgment; not the message of God's grace to his contemporaries. He heralded, as Jesus did to the fallen spirits in prison, His victory and their doom (I Pet. 3:19-20).

d. As Seen in God's Coronation

“and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”.

The warning, the preparing, and the saving had one end in view – the inheritance. He built an ark as a means to an end – to attain perfection in God's sight, the consummation of his faith.

Redemption is for a purpose, not an end in itself. “To the praise of the glory of His grace” says Paul to us in Eph. 1:6.

Noah anticipates that day when He that sits upon the throne will say: “Behold, I make all things new” and “no more curse”.

4. ABRAHAM'S FAITH: (11:8-10)

Prof. A.H. Compton a Chancellor of Washington University has said: “For myself faith begins with the realization that a supreme Intelligence brought the universe into being and created man. It is not difficult for me to have this faith for it is incontrovertible that where there is a plan there is intelligence. An orderly unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered – “In the beginning God”.

Faith in chapter 11 is believing God's Word to the extent of acting upon it. The men and women in Hebrews 11 ventured and won in the power of faith.

No child of Abraham is held in such high esteem by such a large portion of the human race as Abraham – Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans all claim and reverence him. God honored him by calling him His friend (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). Stephan and Paul address him as “Father” (Acts 7:2; Rom. 4:1-18).

Some centuries passed between The Flood and the call of Abraham. In that period nothing is recorded except the rebellion at Babel and its consequences – the confounding of speech and dispersion of mankind.

Ur of the Chaldees the original homeland of Abraham was no dogpatch along the wayside, not a hovel of barbarism. It was the center of culture and commerce. The archaeologist has discovered that the youth of Abraham's time struggled with the same mathematical problems as vex the college student today. Here was the center of learning, the hub of commerce, the city of opportunity for ambitious men. In Abraham's day Ur was right at the head of the Persian Gulf.

During the centuries since, the city has come 150 miles from the head, due to the washing down of silt from flood waters. This city was the New York or London of that day.

There were four great evidences of faith as seen in Abraham's life: (1) "By faith Abraham obeyed and he went out" (8); (2) By faith he "sojourned" and dwelt in tents; (3) By faith "he looked, and saw "a city which had foundation"; (4) "By faith Abraham offered up Isaac" and looked for a resurrection (17).

a. As Seen in His Call (8)

The beginning of the Messianic Nation was a call – "By faith Abraham when he was called". The founder received the promise of an inheritance and this promise he could trust though he knew not how it could be fulfilled.

This call was supernatural. It is evident that God called Abraham twice. First he was called in Ur (Acts 7:2-3); then he was also called in Haran (Gen. 12:1-2). Both of these places were in Mesopotamia. In Gen. 12:1 the Lord adds "from thy father's house". He left Ur with Terah and Lot. In Haran he left Terah who died there.

Here was an idolater, like all his people, given a supernatural call (Josh. 24:2). How this call came we do not know. It could have been in a dream, or a vision, or in direct communication.

This call was also sovereign. "Thou art the Lord God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham" (Neh. 9:7). It was God who alone chose, brought, and gave. God chose Abraham because He willed to do so (Josh. 24:3) – "took, led, gave" sovereign grace.

This call was also separating. (Gen. 12:1; 11:31). Here is what is called the historical record of the instrumental act – "Terah took Abram". But they only got to Haran, still in the land of Mesopotamia; and for five years God's purpose was hindered. But "when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye dwell" (Acts 7:4). Whatever it was that hindered Abram's complete obedience in separation, Terah's death ended it.

The great meaning of separation is therefore death and separation from country, home, relatives, friends if they stand in the way of complete faith obedience. "Get thee out" (Gen. 12:1), "And he went out" (Heb. 11:8). Obedience is then the first law in a life of faith.

The call of God to a life of faith-obedience is always accompanied with His "I wills". "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). "Come unto me and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Come out and be ye separate and I will be a father unto you" (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

b. As Seen in His Conduct (9-10)

First Abraham obeyed and went out, now we see he sojourned and looked.

This sojourning is connected with the first historical event in connection with Abraham's history (Gen. 12:6). Here was nothing for his sight but the Canaanite. What an opportunity for faith! Faith took his eye off the Canaanite and on the Lord. "The Canaanite was then in the land", is connected with "Unto thee will I give this land". Abraham's faith and thoughts were connected with the word of Jehovah and His presence, instead of with the Canaanite. Some years later the ten spies were in this same land; and because they looked by sight and saw the Canaanite, they saw giants that they could not conquer instead of God who would fight for them (Num. 13:32-33).

He Worshipped as a Stranger – "... confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (11:13). "And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him" (Gen. 12:7). An altar unto the Lord with its bleeding sacrifice set him apart from all the heathen with their manifold idolatry.

He Witnessed as a Pilgrim – This is the true order: "strangers and pilgrims". We may be a pilgrim without truly being a stranger; but we cannot be strangers without being pilgrims. And so he became a tent dweller. He had no settled city. Lot who walked by sight and not by faith found himself in a city. Lot walked by sight, and Sodom looked like the Garden of

Eden. When we walk by sight even Satan looks like an angel of light and his ministers like ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Abraham's worship and witness was punctuated by revelations from God, "And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said", etc. Three times after each separation; from Haran, from Egypt, and from Lot, God revealed Himself to Abraham.

He Waited as a Believer (Vr.10) – This city that he looked for is none other than the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-27). Thus Abraham believed in the God of resurrection and a future life. The tents of the patriarchs had no foundations. The heavenly Jerusalem has God as its Designer and Builder. The city will descend out of Heaven (Rev. 3:12; 21:2,10). It was Cain's son Enoch who built the first city.

Some centuries later, Israel obeyed in crossing the Red Sea, but failed to enter the land of Canaan. "Ye would not go up", "ye did not believe Jehovah your God" (Deut. 1:26,32).

5. SARAH'S FAITH (11:11-12) (Gen. 17:15-19; 18:9-15; Rom. 4:19; Isa. 51:1-2)

It is strange, yet true, that Sarah's life should be counted among the heroes of faith. From the O.T. record it seems she was anything but a woman of faith. We read: "Sarah laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?" (Gen 18:12). But in Gen. 21:6 we read: "And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me". God saw beneath the surface and recognized that faith was operative in Sarah, in spite of any momentary defection from faith.

God's saints are never represented as paragons or models of virtue, but are truthfully set before us with all the same frailties and infirmities which characterize ourselves.

Sarah's faith is closely linked with that of Abraham, due to his influence. The explanation of her faith is in God's faithfulness. "She judged Him faithful who had promised". Our trust answers to His truth; our faith to His faithfulness. In Hebrews Sarah's unbelief is forgotten and forgiven; only her faith remembered.

Since the record of Eve, Sarah is the first woman to be fully introduced to us. She is known for her obedience to her husband – "Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord; whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (1 Pet. 3:6).

It is through Sarah's supernatural son Isaac and later the supernatural Son Jesus Christ, that the Jewish race can trace both its natural and spiritual heritage.

Sarah's faith is now to be seen in two particulars:

a. By Fulfilling a Promise – "She judged Him faithful who had promised".

Faith considers God's Word – "And the Lord visited Sarah as He said and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken" (Gen. 21:1; 17:16; 18:10). "As He said" and "as He had spoken". Everything depended upon this. Sarah had no experience that would warrant her faith. There was nothing tangible, material, physical that she could pin her faith upon. God's revelation is still the basis for our faith. What God has said concerning the Assembly, the Body of Christ, its inception, its progress, its program and final purpose must be accepted by faith.

Faith confesses man's weakness – "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?" (Gen. 18:12). See Rom. 4:19. Faith sees the utter inability of the flesh to accomplish anything for God. As long as man thinks he has the ability, God is unable to do anything for him or through him. God had to break Jacob's thigh; send Moses into the wilderness; give Paul a thorn in the flesh. The birth of Isaac introduces a new element in Abraham's household. Ishmael was already there, a son of the flesh. Isaac corresponds to the introduction of a new nature in the believer; Ishmael corresponds to the old nature. Then the conflict begins. There was no conflict in Abraham's house until Isaac was born "not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God" (John 1:13). See also Gal. 4:19; 5:17. The birth of Isaac did not improve Ishmael, or change his bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with MY SON, even with Isaac" Gen. 21:10). The bondwoman was an Egyptian and savored of Egyptian bondage; so the only remedy was to cast her out. To

attempt to improve the old nature is to give a flat denial to Rom. 6:11 – “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”.

Faith Concludes God’s Work – “She judged him faithful who had promised”. “God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me” (Gen. 21:6). This latter took place at the feast of rejoicing when Isaac was weaned. It is when faith both rests and waits that it has reached its climax. See again Hab. 2:3-4. When faith accepts the work as an accomplished fact then it has concluded the work. She “judged” made a final decision by faith, and this faith concludes God’s work in her.

b. By Founding A Posterity (Heb. 11:12)

The word rendered “conceive” in 11:11 is from the Greek word katabole. This word occurs eleven times in the N.T. It is rendered “foundation” in every passage except this one. Thus the word in our text might be translated the same – “founding of seed”. The foundation of a posterity can only mean the promised “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15), even Christ, of Whom it was said: “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Heb. 11:18), “thy seed which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

It was individual – “Sarah herself”. Faith is an individual thing. God works through the individual. The greatest exploits for God have been accomplished by individuals, not masses. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Samuel, David, Elijah, Daniel, Paul are some of the examples. So here, it is “Sarah herself” that comes to faith’s fruition and founds a seed in Isaac.

It was also supernatural – “When she was past age”, “And him as good as dead”. We are taken completely out of the physical sphere and directed to Him Who is its beginning and end. The true emphasis is laid on the one physiological fact that both Abraham and Sarah were “as good as dead” (Rom. 4:19-20; Heb. 11:12). Spiritual things can only come to pass by supernatural means.

It was innumerable – “... as the stars of the sky in multitude and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable”. Both of these speak of countless numbers; so is God’s blessing upon the one who by simple faith believes God. Abraham will have a sand seed, a seed innumerable on this earth; he will also have a star seed, a seed innumerable for the heavenly Jerusalem. Life begins to live when we live by faith. Nothing else really matters.

Therefore faith will bear fruit because it fulfills God’s promise and always founds a posterity. It is ultimately linked with Christ – Isaac – Christ. There are no difficulties nor hindrances to God’s supernatural law of faith. Be weak and dead means He can produce abundant living things.

“The Miracle and Marvel of Resurrection – Sarah’s unbelief was rebuked by the word: ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ (Gen. 18:14), and these words have a fuller message than the English translation supplies. The word “hard” is pala and is rendered “wonderful, marvel” and the like. It is used of the plagues of Egypt and the future day of restoration (Ps. 78:12; Zech. 8:6); it is associated with the wonder of child-birth (Ps. 139:14-15); it enters into the name of the Angel who appeared to Samson’s mother (Jud. 13:18) and above all in the name of that “Child born and the Son given” of whom Isaac was but a type – “His name shall be called Wonderful” (Isa. 9:6). Is anything too wonderful for the Lord of resurrection?” – Chas. H. Welch

6. “STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS” (11:13-16) An Interlude on Faith

The writer now stops to evaluate the heroes of faith mentioned thus far and to set a pattern for those who follow. He has spoken of Abel the true worshipper and martyr; of Enoch who walked with God and was translated and did not see death; of Noah who built an ark for the saving of His house; of Abraham who went out not knowing where he was going; and of Sarah who became the mother of a sand and star seed.

Three things are specifically said of these men and women of faith – they were “strangers, pilgrims, heavenly”. Abraham is the great example of all these three: By faith he “obeyed” and became a stranger; by faith he “sojourned” and became a pilgrim; by faith “he looked” and became heavenly minded.

a. As Seen in the Character of Their Faith (13a)

“These all died in faith”. It isn’t nearly as important what we do at some isolated instance in our life, but very important how we die. This is the greatest epitaph that ever could be placed over a grave – “He died in faith”. These heroes of faith had something for faith to build on – they “received the promises”. God made promises and covenant with them concerning which their faith took hold. Complete faith is composed of three things: Vision, Passion, and Action.

The Vision of faith – “having seen them afar off”. Yes, faith sees. They may not have understood all the elements of the promise. Faith does not need to know how God will bring about the promise; but it needs to believe and have a vision that God will bring it to pass.

The Venture of faith – “and were persuaded of them”. Vision is not enough. It must be translated into persuasion which will venture out for God. We have already seen (6:12-18) that God had confirmed His promise with an oath (V.17).

The Victory of faith – “and embraced them”. They saw the promises in their actual fulfillment; they ventured out in faith believing; and saluted the fulfilled promise. This is the victory and meaning of the Greek word aspadzomai, translated “embraced”.

b. As Seen in the Conduct of their Faith (13b). “And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”. This is the Divine order as seen here as well as at 1 Pet. 2:11. We must become “strangers” before we can become “pilgrims”.

They are “strangers”. Here is indeed a strange paradox. We came into this world, spiritually, as a “stranger – Ye were ... strangers” (Eph. 2:12; 4:18; Col. 1:21); and now as a believer we remain “strangers” spiritually. But what a difference. There was One who came and took the stranger’s place – Jesus Christ, for He was to be made in all things like unto His brethren (Heb. 2:17). It is written: “He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for him (Prov. 11:15). “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (Isa. 53:4). When we discover our glorious surety, then we, like Ruth, ask in amazement: “Why have I found grace in Thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger” (Ruth 2:10). The stranger was shut out from the sanctuary (Ezek. 44:9); he could not draw near in worship (Num. 1:51); He could not exercise the priest’s office (Num. 18:7); He could not receive the holy anointing oil (Exod. 30:31-33); His offering could not be accepted (Lev. 22:25). But now instead of being strangers to God, we are strangers to the world. (See Psa. 119:19; 114:1; 81:5; Lev. 25:23).

They are pilgrims- A pilgrim is one without a fixed habitation, one who is journeying through a strange and foreign land. “For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (Vr. 14). In an anonymous epistle to Diognetus an apologetic letter, probably of the second century, and a gem of early Christian literature, occur the following concerning Christians: “They inhabit their own country, but as sojourners, they take part in all things as citizens, and endure all things as aliens; every foreign country is theirs and every country is foreign”. Abraham could have gone back to Ur of the Chaldees (Vr. 15). But what and where is Ur today? The whole present world is doomed as every city of the past has gone. This world is but a wilderness in the way to Canaan. The pilgrim has affection in another place; treasures in another place; Habitation in another place.

The pilgrim’s heart is a renewed heart; delivered from the love of sin and the world. His head has a knowledge of the way, the way of the Scriptures. His hand is on the staff, the promises on which he leans. The pilgrim perseveres to the end.

c. As Seen in the Consummation of their Faith (14-16)

“They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly”. The city which God hath prepared for them is the New Jerusalem, a city with many dwelling places (John 14:2). This is

the four-square city which John saw coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

This is a better country because it is a heavenly city. It will have a better society. The believer will be no stranger there, for all will be kindred spirits. There will be better security. There will be no tears, no death, no sorrow, no crying, no pain, and no Devil (Rev. 20:10; 21:4). There will be better services. Our service here is often fraught with imperfections, and interruptions. In that city they shall serve Him “day and night”. It will be without weariness and with joy unspeakable.

It is a better city because it is the true city of God. “He hath prepared for them a city”. This city will be entered by those who have put faith in the finished work of Christ and rest upon the promises. The proof of God’s acceptance of the patriarchs lies in what God did for them. Their faith accepted His purpose.

How glorious is the end of the journey! Whether it be for the faithful remnant in Israel, or the Church, the Body of Christ, it will be glorious. For us Paul says: “That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

“O pilgrim as you journey,
Do you ever gladly say,
In spite of heavy weather
And the roughness of the way,
That it really does not matter,
All the strange and bitter stress,
Heat and cold, and toil and sorrow,
Will be healed with blessedness!

For the road leads home,
Sweet, sweet home!
O who would mind the journey
When the road leads home?”

7. ABRAHAM’S FAITH (17-19)

This is the second reference to Abraham’s Faith-Obedience as recorded in this chapter. We have seen that there were a series of faith crises in his life: First, he obeyed and went out; then he sojourned; and thirdly he looked for a city. Now we shall see that he offered. This was not only the final act of faith, but the most difficult act of all. These four great crises in Abraham’s life led him to some wonderful results: “He went out” led him to be a “stranger”; “He sojourned” led him to be a “pilgrim”; “He looked for a city” led him to be “heavenly”; “He offered up Isaac” led him to perfection in faith.

The Higher Critics have ascribed this act of Abraham as “an uncontrollable impulse of Moloch worship”. It was true that God had warned Moses to tell the people not to follow the worship of the heathen in the land. This worship included the sacrificing of their children (See Deut. 12:29-31). So the critics say it was not faith, but a mistaken suggestion of Abraham’s own mind. Abraham is therefore to be condemned and not commended.

There is in this passage a faint adumbration or type of the Lord Jesus Christ: (1) “When he was tried” – Gethsemane; (2) “Offered up Isaac” – Golgotha; (3) “Able to raise him” – Grave.

Faith is now cast into the crucible for testing and triumph. “Faith is a power, a moral force, cleansing, energizing, directing and overcoming” – John C. Page.

The following is a quotation from Perfection or Perdition by Welch and Allen – “James 2:22 declares that in the offering of Isaac Abraham’s faith was ‘perfected’, brought to its

true end, the keyword of Hebrews. Translated into terms of doctrine, the several steps in Abraham's faith are seen to be so many approximations of the cross of Christ: (1) The step that followed the death of Terah stands for the crucifixion of the old man (Rom. 6:6). (2) The separation from Lot, and the vision that followed with the dwelling at Hebron, the place of fellowship, stands for the crucifixion of the flesh (Gal. 5:24). (3) The repudiation of all reward from the king of Sodom "lest he should say, I have made Abraham rich" stands for the crucifixion of the world (Gal. 6:14). (4) The offering up of Isaac, the beloved son, is the fellowship of His sufferings, the conformity to His death, which is on the one hand intimately connected with the perfecting, the prize, and the heavenly citizenship, and on the other is strongly contrasted with those who mind earthly things, and constitute themselves "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:10-21; Heb. 6:6).

a. The Trial of His Faith (17-18) Gen. 22:1-10

There is a great difference between testing or trial and tempting. God tests or tries us to bring out the best in us; Satan tempts us to bring out the evil in us. (See James 1:13). Life is a succession of trials, for character is only possible through discipline. There are preparatory trials which lead to the supreme test. God did not try Lot's faith; Sodom was sufficient for that.

We see first of all the method of this trial, which was both singular and severe. It can be seen by asking several interrogative questions. WHOM? "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest". God is most specific in order that Abraham may not be mistaken as to the order – "Son, only son, Isaac, lovest". God will make His will doubly sure, and painfully plain. WHEN? "take now". When God speaks, He demands action. WHERE? "And get thee into the land of Moriah, ... upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of". A land and a mountain with God's promised guidance. Moriah has come to stand for the place of renunciation and crucifixion. WHAT? "And offer him there for a burnt offering". To make a supreme sacrifice. He was to take no substitute from the flock or herd with him. WHY? That is a child's question. Faith in maturity never asks why; only fear asks why. The creature does not question the Creator; the finite does not interrogate the Infinite; the relative does not reason with the Absolute.

We also see the measure of the trial. "And Abraham rose up early. ... offered up Isaac; ... offered up his only begotten son". Abraham reasoned not, nor staggered; but was prompt, deliberate, and determined. This was not a God and sinner trial; but a Father and son trial. It was prompt. Here he was like Paul (see Gal. 1:15-16). Faith never confers with flesh and blood, never considers the mere reasonableness of the act. As soon as faith takes anything else than the Word of God, it ceases to be faith. To hear was to obey. He rose up early; and did as God said: took fire and the knife; Isaac carried the wood. The fire represents: holiness of God; the knife represents the justice of God. Abraham built an altar, laid on the wood, and his son. So God from eternity had offered His Son. He was "the Lamb of God". Then we read: "Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son". It was then that Abraham died. He died to the aesthetical. All natural affection and natural pleasure must die. He also died to the ethical. The moral law said: "Thou shalt not kill". He died to mere reason. Mere reason would see no good in it all. He died to all religion. It was a burnt-offering. It represented sin, the sin of human guilt. It was a bloody sacrifice – fire, wood, and death.

b. The Triumph of His Faith (19)

"Accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead". His faith believed in the resurrection from the dead. He had received Isaac, in birth, as from the dead, so why not now.

This is seen in the righteous authority of God. Abraham believed that God had a right to his obedience. God would not command what was wrong. God is supreme, righteous, holy, and loving. He also believed in the resurrection power of God. Faith in resurrection is most remarkable in Abraham's day. He had never witnessed, nor even heard of a resurrection. He also had faith in the revealed promise of God: "in Isaac shall thy seed be called". If God had said it, it

was his responsibility to fulfill it. Abraham's faith anticipated the death and resurrection of the child of promise.

"Abraham believed God" (Rom. 4:3). Nothing greater is recorded of him and nothing greater can be said of us. To believe God notwithstanding fears, feelings, and frailties is a great achievement in Christian experience. (See Rom. 4:20-21). "Abraham believed God, ... and he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23). Who can measure the distance between this verse and Joshua 24:2: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, ... and they served other gods". Only faith could bring Abraham from an idolater in Ur to a perfect believer in Canaan.

8. ISAAC'S FAITH (20) (Gen. 27:1-28:4; Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:10-13; 1 John 5:4)

In the next four representatives of faith, namely, Isaac, Jacob, Moses' Parents, and Moses we have one general subject: that aspect of faith which "overcomes the world", and gives victory over man. It delivers both from the fear of man, and from the praise of man. Isaac – overcoming the will of the flesh; Jacob – overcoming the will of man; Moses' Parents – overcoming the fear of man; Moses – overcoming the praise of man.

Isaac has the shortest record of all the patriarchs mentioned in Genesis. The only chapter completely given over to his life is Gen. Ch. 26. In Gen. 25:23 the Lord said to Rebecca concerning the twins: "The elder shall serve the younger". This was said before they were born. Paul comments in Romans 9:11 on this and says: "that the purpose of God according to election might stand".

"The whole story of Isaac and his wife and their sons, represents unto us divine sovereignty, wisdom, and faithfulness, working effectually through the frailties, infirmities, and sins of all the persons concerned in the matter" – John Owen.

Man is always prone to want his own way. Esau wanted a mess of pottage more than anything else – the will of the flesh. Man wants prestige, position, prosperity, and power.

We have in the faith of Isaac what is known as "The Law of the Seconds" (See Heb. 10:9). This is seen in many instances: Cain is set aside, Abel is chosen; Ishmael is set aside, Isaac is chosen; Esau is set aside, Jacob is chosen; Reuben is set aside, Joseph and Judah chosen; Moses fails the first time, but succeeds the second time; Israel failed in the past, she will be victorious in the future; the flesh is set aside, the spirit becomes victorious; Christ is victorious at His Second Coming, He was rejected at His First Advent. We see from this that God sets aside all human succession.

Both sons, Jacob and Esau are blessed. A choice is now made between those through whom the promise might equally have been fulfilled. It was not as in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, between the son of the bondwoman and the son of the free, but between twin brothers. The will of God inverted the purely human order. Both sons were blessed, but the younger had precedence over the elder, and became heir of the promise.

a. Overcomes The Foes of Faith

The first foe is parental intention. It is evident that Isaac felt that both by birth and by right, Esau, the elder should receive the birthright blessing. His affection for Esau was great because he loved the venison that Esau brought him (Gen. 25:28). The will of the flesh was strong in good intentions. What we wish because of natural desire may not be the will of God. Esau had sold his birthright for a mess of red pottage; now he is trying to get it with a mess of venison (See Matt. 4:4).

Isaac knew two things concerning his sons: first, "The elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23); and secondly, Esau had already sold his birthright for a mess of pottage (Gen. 25:27-34).

The great foe of faith is always Satanic Intervention. Satan's field of maneuver in our lives is through the psychical into the physical, the flesh. He operates through pride, position, and privilege both within and without. All that puffs up is in the flesh.

Every believer has another vantage ground – the spiritual. This is regulated by the Word of God, and by the Spirit of God. Here Satan can have no advantage over us. Of Esau it is said: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” (Heb. 12:16). The word “profane” is the Greek word bebelos, meaning unhallowed, common, not initiated; it is the opposite of sacred. Spoken of those outside the temple.

b. Recognizes the Facts of Faith – “By faith Isaac blessed” It was Isaac's faith, not Esau's favor. Man's desire or wish is now completely ruled out in favor of Divine faith. (See Heb. 12:17). Esau's favor could not overrule his father's faith. There could be no ground of repentance in Isaac because he was ruled by faith; and faith had acted. Isaac's faith was able to overcome his son's venison, Esau's age, being older, and also Esau's tearful desire and pleading that he be given the blessing. Here we see the wonderful strength of faith. It overcomes all that is profane – the will of the flesh.

It was Isaac's faith, not Jacob's fraud (Gen. 27:33). Somehow imbedded in the story of the trickery on the part of Jacob there must have been faith in Isaac. No fraud could ever have taken the place of faith.

It was Isaac's faith, not Rebecca's fancy. It says that, “Rebecca loved Jacob” (Gen. 25:28). She had set her mind and heart upon Jacob. “And Isaac loved Esau” (Gen. 25:28). They both had their likes and dislikes. Just because Rebecca loved Jacob was not the reason he received the blessing. Paul says that it was entirely on the basis of God's election (Rom. 9:11). It was based upon God's purpose, which purpose Isaac knew, and acted upon. So Isaac's faith triumphed over the carnality of Esau, the crookedness of Rebecca and Jacob; and he blessed them both according to God's elective purpose.

c. Recognizes the Future of Faith – “things to come”. Faith must overcome the temporal; it operates in the future. Isaac blessed both Jacob and Esau concerning their future (See Gen. 27:28, 39-40). So faith must overcome the now and the visible. “Of things not seen”, “having seen them afar off”, “as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:7,13, 27). Everything that we see, touch and know now and here is but for the moment. Faith reaches out and touches the future, the eternal things. So neither time nor material things can be food for faith. There can be no foundation for faith in the temporal and physical.

So the victory comes, not in looking at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen (See 2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Therefore if we are to emulate Isaac's faith, we must like him overcome the will of the flesh. Not only in worship, but in every department of Christian service “the will of the flesh” is seen in active operation. Many things are undertaken because we like them, not always because they are God's will for us. Our dislikes may be more in keeping with God's will and a life of faith than our desires.

9. JACOB'S FAITH (21) Gen. 47:31; 48:1-22

Faith has been called: “The gastric juice of the soul”. The most wholesome food is poison to the stomach without gastric juice. This wonderful solvent which God has provided must melt, separate, and dissolve the food, or else it will not assimilate, and be carried through the system repairing wastes, feeding the blood, and keeping the current of life full. Faith is to the soul what this wonderful solvent is to the body. Without faith, the Word preached will not profit, “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb. 4:2).

In Isaac, faith overcomes the will of the flesh; in Jacob it overcomes the will of man. As a young man, Jacob was as someone has called him, “A sorry saint”. His life was a continual

vacillation between fear and faith. His name Jacob means “supplanted, trickster, prevaricator”. He was constantly ordering his own affairs, and had success securing his own way and will. He contended with Esau in the womb, though here he failed (Gen. 25:29ff). He contended with Esau for the blessing and secured it (Gen. Ch. 27). He contended with Laban for his daughters, and obtained them (Gen. Ch. 29). He contended with Laban for his cattle, and secured them (Gen. Chs. 30-31). He contended with the Angel of God for the blessing; but here the Angel prevailed (Gen. Ch. 32). Now his name is changed to Israel, which literally means, “God striveth”. Jacob was a struggler, contender from the beginning; but now God lamed him as to his own strength and made him limp.

a. As Seen Objectively

“By faith Jacob when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph”. “And the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads” (Gen. 48:16).

Jacob is now old and about to die, and he wished to bless the two sons of Joseph. But Joseph had his own ideas about the blessing; namely Manasseh, the elder first and then Ephraim, the younger. All this shows the strength of Joseph’s will. So Jacob must now overcome the will of Joseph, although he is the son of his love.

It was a redemptive blessing, given in the name of “the angel which redeemed me”. The Hebrew word for “redeemed” is “goel”, meaning “A Kinsman-Redeemer”. The only true Kinsman Redeemer is Jesus Christ (See Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14-15).

It was also an intuitive, intellectual blessing. “And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hand wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn” (Gen. 48:14). When Joseph objected, then Jacob said: “I know it, my son, I know it” (Gen. 48:19). Yes, Jacob knew, and this intuitive spiritual knowledge that comes by faith is strong enough to overcome all the will of man.

It was finally triumphant faith – “But truly his younger brother shall be greater than he and his seed shall become a multitude of nations” (Gen. 48:19). The word translated “grow” is the Hebrew idiom for “to swarm as fishes”. The fish is the symbol of the Jewish nation. This shows that they shall never grow by uniting with the Gentile nations.

b. As Seen Subjectively

“and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff”. The Septuagint (LXX) Version has it, “And Israel bowed himself upon the bed’s head”. Both “staff” and “head” in Hebrew have the same three consonants – Mem, Tau, and Heth. But the vowel pointings are different, and hence pronunciation is different. “Head” is Mittah; and “staff” is matteh. The Hebrew here we believe is the correct translation, namely “staff”. He worships both as a stranger and a pilgrim. Egypt was not his promised land; it was Canaan. He could only be a stranger here. The “staff” is symbolical of the pilgrim life. “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).

Therefore as Jacob overcame the will of man, so we must by faith take our stand against all the will of man. “I know it, perfectly know it”. This is the language of faith, not sight. Jacob crossed his hands. Faith will often cross up the will of man.

10. JOSEPH’S FAITH (22) Gen. 50:24-26; 49:22-26)

Joseph was a man of great pomp and glory. He had come from the pit and the prison to be prime minister of Egypt. After many sorrows and afflictions (Amos 6:6), self-denials and suffering he had come next to the king in the land of Egypt.

As Isaac overcame the will of the flesh, and Jacob the will of man, so now Joseph is called upon to overcome all the glory of man. Who would think that the future exodus from Egypt of Israel and the bones of Joseph would be objects of faith in his life. Joseph had been highly exalted in Egypt. It certainly would have been in accord with nature and the glory of man

to arrange for some grand memorial; some colossal pyramid; some outstanding tomb; some glorious monument. But all this is by-passed for something greater – entrance to and occupation of the Land of Canaan. His faith is both national and personal, for God’s dealing with Israel is national and personal. The charge concerning his bones was fulfilled. Moses took them out of Egypt (Exod. 13:19) and the Children of Israel buried them at Shechem (Josh. 24:32).

a. He Believed in God’s Revelation

The objects of Joseph’s faith are entirely in the future. His faith was not a pyramid faith. Egypt had one of the seven wonders of the world – the magnificent mausoleums – the pyramids. But it would take no special faith to believe in these wonders as burial places. Here was plenty evidence of the glory and power of man. His personal faith was of a prophetic nature. He must have believed in the promise of God to Abraham (see Gen. 15:13-14). Faith leaps over all barriers and sees the end of God’s purpose. As yet there was no servitude and no affliction in Egypt. As far as sight was concerned there was no sign of it.

b. He Believed in God’s Restoration

“made mention (remembered) of the departing (exodus) of the children of Israel”.

Joseph knew of a surety that the exodus would take place 400 years after the birth of Isaac (see Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6; Exod. 12:40; Gal. 3:17). The exodus would bring unheard of power. It took the many and mighty plagues to convince Pharaoh of God’s power (see Acts 7:36). Here was also a display of unheard of provision. Israel could have numbered some three million souls with much cattle, sheep and goats. But God provided water out of the rock, manna from heaven, quails from the sea, shoes that did not wear out, and power over all their enemies.

c. He believed in God’s Resurrection

“and gave commandment concerning his bones”.

Joseph believed the word of God, the oath which God made to his fathers – “the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Gen. 50:24). Therefore Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel that they should bring his bones to Canaan (Gen. 50:25).

So Joseph gave his commandment concerning his bones. He wanted to rise in the land of his fathers. Therefore his faith overcomes all the glory of Egypt which could only be temporary. He looked to the future heritage in the Land of Promise.

We too who believe God have a blessed promise of a portion above all others – a going up over the hill-country of the Amorites; of being “called on high” (Phil 3:14); of experiencing that wondrous change (Phil. 3:20-21), “fashioning like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ”; and, being manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3:4). The greatness of our hope should make us triumph over all the glory of man here and now.

11. AMRAM & JOCHEBED’S FAITH (Moses parents) Vr. 23 Acts 7:20-21)

In Moses’ parents we are now going to see another aspect of faith – faith overcoming the fear of man.

We are told that “there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph (Exo.1:8). In Exo.1:7 we are told of the marvelous growth of the children of Israel. This new king must have been new in every sense, not only a new dynasty (see Isa. 52:4). Stephen says “The people grew and multiplied in Egypt till another (heteros) King arose, which knew not Joseph” (Acts 7:17-18). This means another of a different kind.

“They were not afraid of the king’s command”. They might well have been, for the kings of Egypt were ferocious wild beasts, as their monuments show. The visitor to Karnak still sees pictures on their palace walls of the monarch grasping long hair of several hapless captives

and smashing their heads with a mace. Another king is seen throwing miserable men to the crocodiles in the Nile River.

The marvelous increase of the Israelites caused the king to do two things: (1) To oppress them with heavy burdens under cruel taskmasters; (2) To decrease them by destroying all the male children. Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill every male child, but to let the females live. But we read: “The more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew” (Ex. 1:12). There was another power behind the throne. There was “the Jew’s enemy”, a satanic evil demonic force using Pharaoh. Later on he used Athaliah to “destroy all the seed royal of the house of Judah” (2 Chron. 22:10); and Haman to destroy the whole nation (Esth. 2:6-8); and Herod to destroy the “Seed of the woman”, Jesus Christ.

However, God intervenes, thwarts the purpose of Satan and preserves His seed (see Job 5:13; Prov. 19:21; 23:10-11; Ps. 105:26,38). What man cannot do, God can. The Jews have a proverb: “When the tale of bricks is doubled then comes Moses”.

a. It Was the Faith of Protection

“Moses ... was hid three months of his parents”. Moses was protected by his parents for three months in the home. It says “they saw he was a proper child” (Acts 7:20). The word translated “proper” is asteios and comes from the root astu, meaning refined, comely, beautiful. The Latin uses the word elegans. However, faith must have seen more than just an outward refinement; it must have seen God’s appointed destiny in Moses.

12. MOSES’ FAITH (11:24-28) Exod. 2:11-15; Acts 7:17-36.

The most outstanding renunciation of modern times was that of King Edward VIII. “At long last I am permitted to speak for myself”. These were the opening words of the last speech which he made as king of England. The body of his address revolved around the phrase: “The woman I love”. Then came the solemn statement: “I have therefore executed an instrument of abdication on behalf of myself and my heirs”. It was something for the world to talk about. Some regarded it as heroic renunciation; others as mere selfish satisfaction.

But Edward is utterly outclassed by Moses both as to moral worth and physical humiliation.

Moses is one of the outstanding Biblical characters. We have faith operating in his life from babyhood, when his parents hid him in the home and later among the flags of the Nile; then in his rejection of Egypt; at the Passover; and the crossing of the Red Sea.

a. His Complete Renunciation (24,27)

We have in these two verses two renunciations: the first having to do with the physical and the second more with the spiritual.

“When he was come to years”. Moses had now matured into manhood. There must now come a time when Pharaoh must know the mind of his foster son. They had trained him from infancy; but he is the son of Jochebed and Amram, of the blood of Levi. He venerates his ancestors, he glories in Abraham and Jacob, and he worships the true God. Will he be true to this God of his fathers, or to Egypt with its idols, its pleasures, and its great wealth?

Moses is now on the mount of temptation, of a momentous decision, of far-reaching destiny. He looks out from the imperial palace and sees the mighty pyramids, the sacred river Nile flowing like a ribbon toward the sea; and all the wealth and glory of Egypt. But then he looks in another direction and sees his people in bondage and hard labor. He also remembers his mother’s teaching concerning the promise made to Abraham (see Gen. 15:13-16).

We see here a great contrast between Joseph and Moses. Joseph was led step by step up to the throne of Egypt; while Moses is led step by step away from Egypt and its throne and glory. In the day of Joseph the time was not at hand for the deliverance of Israel; in Moses’ day it was at hand.

The expression in Exod. 2:11 – “when Moses was grown” denotes an increase in stature and years, but this Hebrew verb gadal also denotes growth in dignity and importance. The expression here in Heb. 11:24 – “come to years” (megas genomenos) means, “having become great”. Moses had come to maturity, full knowledge, the age of accountability; and so it was time for him to make a choice.

“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”. Pharaoh’s daughter had rescued him, befriended him, made him her adopted son, educated him and provided for him the royal pleasures and pomp of Egypt (Acts 7:21). He must now refuse to become heir-apparent to the throne of Egypt. It says “By faith Moses”. Inasmuch as faith cometh by hearing, Moses must have heard from God through his mother. “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). He must also have been learned in all the wisdom of God. The museum at Cairo has a jewel room with priceless jewelry from Moses’ time. There are golden ornaments and priceless furniture from the palace; all which Moses rejected.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king”. The “forsaking” here has been interpreted of three occasions:

- (1) When Moses fled Egypt after the murder of the Egyptian (Exod. 2:14-15).
- (2) When he forty years later led the children of Israel out of Egypt (Exod. Ch. 14).
- (3) When he morally & spiritually defied the king and performed the ten plagues (Exod. Chs. 7-12).

It could not have been the first because we read that “Moses feared” and “Moses fled” (Exod. 2:14-15). Those who hold that the forsaking here means the first, base it upon Isa. 59:16; 63:5).

It doesn’t seem likely that it was the second because the keeping of the Passover follows verse 27. It comes chronologically before the event of leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

We believe it is rather the third when he returned from the wilderness and led the people out by means of the plagues and the miracles performed.

“For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”. Only by faith can we truly endure. It is the opposite of sight; it sees things invisible to human sight.

Moses stood firm, inflexible, steadfast, and immovable. He held out in spite of Pharaoh’s continued prevarications and changes of mind. When Pharaoh urged that they should worship God in the land (Exod. 8:25) Moses declared: “It is not meet to do”, it must be in the wilderness (8:27). When Pharaoh agreed to the wilderness, but urged that it might not be “very far away” (8:28), Moses endured, insisting that it must be a three day’s journey (8:27). When Pharaoh again agreed, but urged that only the men should go (10:11), Moses endured and insisted “we will go with our young and with our old” (10:9). When Pharaoh agreed, but urged that the flocks and the herds should stay (10:24), Moses endured and affirmed, “our cattle also shall go with us” (10:26).

We must put ourselves on both redemption and resurrection ground. Israel must keep the Passover and then go on to the other side of the Red Sea. Moses insisted on a three day’s journey, typical of resurrection. Only as we stand on redemption and resurrection ground can we know God’s perfect will and His perfect way.

What a precious faith of Moses! When we are urged to worship God in Egypt, let us endure, and realize that it is impossible for us to combine heavenly light with Egyptian darkness. There is no compromise, no border-land in the realm of faith. Nothing but a complete separation from Egypt, all its maxims, its worship and its ways. Nothing but redemption and resurrection ground in Christ Jesus will enable us to endure and not fear neither king nor kingdom.

“If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances” (Col. 2:20). “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). Here is

true separation. This takes us far away, completely out of range of Egypt. It may lead through a wilderness, but it takes us to – the mount of God; The tent of His assembly; the guidance of His pillar of cloud and fire; the worship and a tabernacle “not made with hands” (Heb. 9:11).

b. His Consecrated Reception (25)

Life cannot be a vacuum or a void. A rejection must be accompanied by a reception. “Choosing” means that he deliberately preferred to suffer pain rather than enjoy pleasure.

A Christian who lives like one is always a paradox to the world – a seeming inconsistency. The world cannot understand our choices. Moses looked at the existence of things. He saw that both suffering and pleasure were short-lived. However, one led to glory; the other to grief. To be realistic, pleasure is always short-lived. Adam and Eve in tasting the forbidden fruit; Achan’s possession of the Babylonish treasures; Ahab’s seizure of Naboth’s vineyard; Judas holding his cursed bribe. Many of the Scriptural names describing “pleasure” have a history of gloom and sadness about them: Naomi, means “pleasant” (Ruth 1:20) but soon became “Mara” – bitterness. Naaman, the leper bears the same meaning (2 Kgs. Ch. 5). The city of Nain also means “pleasant”. It is remembered for its casket with a dead man on his way to the tombs.

It is the “pleasures of sin” that Moses shunned and rejected. Pleasure has entered more into sin than what we perhaps have anticipated. The first temptation came partly through pleasure (See Gen. 3:6). Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was “pleasant to the eyes” so she looked and lusted, and learned that the pleasure of sin was just for a season. The love of pleasure is a mark of Babylon – “given to pleasure” (Isa. 47:8; Rev. 18:7, 12-19). It is also one of the prominent signs of the “last days” – “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4).

Pleasure can be extremely dangerous. It is the highway to poverty. “He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man” (Prov. 21:17). It is a close ally to death. “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Tim. 5:6). Excess of pleasure chokes the Word of Truth. “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). It brings disappointment. “I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it” (Eccl. 2:1-2).

c. His Confident Recognition (26)

Of “the reproach of Christ”. It doesn’t say that he put up with it, or simply endured it, but elected to suffer reproach. It is here the genitive of relation; not of possession. It is our reproach for Christ. Christ in the days of His flesh suffered reproach. After the apostles were imprisoned and beaten “they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). And it was Paul who said: “I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses, for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor. 12:10).

The cross brings a skandalon, a shame. It is offensive to the natural man. This “reproach” Moses counted “greater riches than the treasures of Egypt”.

Of “the recompense of the reward”. Moses could, by faith, look far down the corridors of time and see “the reward”. So what are the short days of grief here to the ages of glory that are to come!

“O for a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by many a foe, That will not tremble on the brink of poverty or woe”.

d. His Continual Remembrance (28)

All the verbs in this chapter are in the past (aorist) tense, a past completed act, except in verses 5,17,28 where they are in the perfect tense. Therefore instead of reading “he kept”, it should read “he hath kept”, as in the original, indicating the continuance of the ordinance and the permanent nature of the record. Moses did not do this as he had done the other acts of faith. They were all personal; and hence past and gone, all but the record. But this act of faith is

perpetual in its act and blessing. It is like the translation of Enoch which is typical of another translation; and the sacrifice of Isaac, the reality of which it was a type, continues forever.

The institution of the Passover was therefore not only for that night; it was perpetuated to tell of Him – “Christ our passover slain for us” (1 Cor. 5:7) or the Lamb foreordained and slain before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-20). So the Passover was an act of faith similar to that of Noah’s building the ark.

The circumstance of the Passover both for Egypt and the Israelites are as follows: God’s judgments had been poured out upon Egypt and its Pharaoh king. A crisis had arrived, for after nine plagues had been sent Pharaoh and the Egyptians still remained obstinate. Moses had been promised death if he ever appeared in Pharaoh’s presence again (Exod. 10:28-29). On the other hand, Moses had promised to deliver his people from Egypt, and now after nine plagues they are in worse plight than ever. It was at this moment that Moses heard from God, and acted in faith upon the Divine revelation.

What would the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts accomplish when all the other nine terrors had failed? To select a lamb on the 10th day of the month to be slain on the fourteenth; and then eaten in such peculiar fashion would indeed take faith in the Word of God. It was faith in the sprinkled blood that told of the merits of the antitype. All is summed up in two sentences: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exod. 12:13).

Paul wanted the Hebrews of his time to heed the admonition and go forth “without the camp” as their fathers had gone forth out of Egypt. Paul wanted them to understand and experience the greater blessings through “the blood of Christ” which spoke of better things than the Passover and all the Levitical offerings. The counterpart for us as members of the Body of Christ is found in Col. 1:12-14. The same faith, in the same Word of God, and in the blood of Christ can deliver us from all bondage and bring peace and security in Christ.

The important thing to note is “when He seeth the blood ... the Lord will pass over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come ... to smite you” (Exod. 12:23). So it is not first of all our experience, but God’s recognition. The emotional experience will follow. For a first-born son to have put forth faith in the blood which was not sprinkled would have given him peace of mind, but not certainty. On the other hand if he doubted that the blood had been sprinkled, and it was there, would give him security, but no peace. Security depends upon God’s finished act; peace depends upon our faith in God’s Word that He will and has accomplished the act.

God redeems us in order to possess us. “I have redeemed thee, thou art mine” (Isa. 43:1). The blood of Christ is precious, but it is also possessive.

13. ISRAEL’S FAITH AT THE RED SEA (11:29) (Ex. 13:17-15:2)

This experience of the Red Sea demonstrates the Obedience of Faith. It is like the faith of Abraham. Both Israel and Abraham are seen in faith-obedience to a command: “Go!” to Abraham it was “Go out”; to Israel: “Go forward”!

It seems that every great movement of faith must face an impasse, an impassible road, blind alley without escape. Look at the Children of Israel. They are exactly in the place of God’s ordering; “before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-Zephon” (Exod. 14:2). Yet that place looked like a death-trap in their eyes and in the eyes of their enemies. Here they were, a vast company of some three million souls, shut in by mountain, desert, sea, and the Egyptian army. But difficulties are no proof that we are out of the will of God. More often they are the portals into a larger experience of His will. His will may lead to seas and mountains. “His paths are in the deep waters” and “He maketh his mountains a way” (Isa. 43:16; Ps. 77:19; Isa. 49:11).

Our attention is directed to Jehovah and Israel. The fact is again and again emphasized that Jehovah “brought them out of Egypt”. This fact they knew. Therefore they kept

the Passover. Now they heard another revelation: “The Lord shall bring thee in the land” (Exod.13:5; Deut. 6:23). The Red Sea is first mentioned in Exod. 10:19 and is frequently mentioned in the historical books, and the Psalms some 20 times, but never in the prophets. What a step of faith it was then to descend from the shore above the level of the waters to the depths beneath it. Here were walls of water on either side. How perilous the path! Yet, Israel passed safely to the other side, while the Egyptians perished. The difference was FAITH, faith in God’s Word and its power to bring them safely through to the other side.

We see here first The Crisis. “And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes ... and they were sore afraid” (Exod. 14:10). What would be the effect of this sight but fear and fright. These are the fruits of sense and sight. Then they begin to chide Moses, in words of grossest unbelief” (14:11-12). They were now shut in between the great fortress Migdol, which was on the Shur, or wall built to protect Egypt from Asian invasion, and the sea, and Pharaoh’s hosts behind. On the other side was The Wilderness (Exod. 14:2-3). It was indeed a crisis. It was a crisis hour for the Egyptians. God must be vindicated; His honor and glory must be preserved. Pharaoh and all his host would know that God was on the throne and that He was the true God, with almighty power (Exod. 14:4).

It was also a crisis for Israel. While the Egyptians were to learn that God was a Sovereign Monarch, Israel too must learn her lesson that this same God was not only a Sovereign Monarch, but also a gracious God. Israel’s relationship to this God must be one of faith in His Word. Israel had seen her enemies and feared; she is now to see the salvation of Jehovah through simple faith – “He will show you today” (14:13).

Then, secondly, we see The Commands – “Stand still ... Go forward” (Exod. 14:13,15). The commands cannot be given until the promise has been accepted. “Jehovah said”, occurs some 45 times in Exodus. This puts Divine emphasis upon Jehovah’s words. “Stand still”, then “Go forward”. This is the Divine order. “Stand still” for what? “See the salvation of the Lord”. It is useless to “go forward” until we by faith have accepted “the salvation of the Lord”. The moving forward is relatively easy when we have comprehended “the salvation of the Lord”. How necessary that we stop, stand still and recognize our position “in Christ” as being with Him dead, raised, ascended, and seated on high.

With the command, “Go forward” there comes now the other command “lift thou up thy rod”. The forward movement will always open up for us if we have stopped and recognized “the salvation of the Lord”. In their fear they expected to be taken captive by Pharaoh and possibly destroyed. Their very last thought was to stop before the sea, recognize the omnipotent hand of God and move forward.

Finally, we see the consequences (Exod. 14:22,28). It is amazing how easy things are done by faith. The impossible becomes the sublimely simple. The Children of Israel did not have to swim over nor build a fleet of barges; they walked. God simply sent His east wind and held up the waters on either side. Israel faced the wall of water on either side and crossed on dry ground; the Egyptians faced the walls of water and dry ground and were drowned. The way of safety to faith is utter peril to unbelief.

The Apostle Paul to the Hebrews in his day admonished them: “Let us go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1). Jesus Christ had suffered, died and risen. His offering was sufficient. The New Covenant would lead to perfection. But alas, they prefer to go back to the weak and insufficient Old Covenant. In Egypt the Israelites had sighing, crying, and groaning (Ex. 2:23). On the other side of the Red Sea they had a song of redemption, of glorious triumph (Ex. 15:1). The path of faith which they took was a path of Salvation, a path to Security, and a path of Satisfaction.

14. ISRAEL'S FAITH AT JERICHO 11:30 (Josh. 5:13–6:27; 2 Cor. 10:4)

The second example of the Obedience of Faith on the part of Israel is the taking of Jericho. As the Red Sea rolled its barricade against the exit of faith; so now Jericho challenged faith's triumphant entry to the land of promise. But that mighty barrier of a fortress was no more a hindrance to faith than the sea. Faith in God shakes both sea and land. The great walls of Jericho might withstand the assaults of armies, but the tramp and trump of faith are too much for them.

Jericho fell "by an earthquake" says a professor Garstang. It was "by faith" declares the Apostle. The professor might be right. God used an east wind to hold back the waters of the Red Sea; so here He may have used an earthquake. However, it was no less a miracle.

History reveals that Jericho was rebuilt twice since being destroyed in Joshua's day. First, by Hiel in the reign of Ahab (B.C. 918) See 1 Kgs. 16:34. It was looted and destroyed by one Simon, under Herod the Great. Then it was rebuilt by Archelaus, the son of Herod. This was the Jericho of Christ's day. It was destroyed by Vespasian in A.D. 68. Today there is a mere hamlet there.

Between verses 29 and 30 here in Hebrews 11 here is a long period of some 40 years. The wilderness experiences of Israel were not by faith, but by unbelief.

"The walls of Jericho fell down" is the simple statement. Jericho was the key to the conquest of Canaan. The Angel of Jehovah and Joshua had a conference. A plan of siege was committed unto Joshua, a plan quite unique and original, but mighty enough to tumble the walls of Jericho.

a. Tested By Command (Josh. 6:2-4)

Directions were given by God to Joshua for the taking of Jericho. They were to encompass the city once a day for six days, and on the seventh day, seven times. Then they were to blow the trumpets and the city would collapse. The essence of Israel's faith was the obedience to a command. It surely required faith because such a command was entirely contrary to reason. Never had such an effect been produced by such a cause. There was every ground for doubt and unbelief. So Israel's obedience to God's command by Moses brought them through the Red Sea, and delivered them from Pharaoh; Israel's obedience to God's command by Joshua carried them across Jordan and delivered the stronghold of Jericho into their hands.

This command included the promise of Jehovah – "I have given into thine hand Jericho". That was enough for them. God had spoken and His word is immutable, and unchangeable. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). So Israel heard the Word of the Lord from Joshua (Josh. 6:6-7), what Joshua had first heard from Jehovah (6:2-5). Faith in God's Word is the compass on uncharted seas, the guide star in the dark night, the lamp on the shadowy pathway, the staff on the rugged highway of life.

The command also included the plan of Jehovah (Josh. 6:3-4). If General Joshua had called a council of war, one might have suggested the reduction of Jericho by sapping and mining; another, to place catapults on the neighboring hills to batter down the gates; and still another, to protract a siege by the slow process of famine. But Joshua had a word from Jehovah as to the plan and this he and Israel accepted. It took courage to follow this Divine plan. Many an arrow was shot down upon them from the wall, and many a rock hurled at them. But even worse was the ridicule and laughter at their seemingly ridiculous marching round the city.

b. Triumphant in Conquest. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down". It was entirely by God's power. There was no inherent power in that queer procession. God's power is manifested in our weakness. Paul knew the power of God through the weakness and infirmity of his flesh – "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Faith recognizes human impotence that commands Divine omnipotence. The conquest also included God's purpose (See Josh. 1:2-3). God had given this land to His people Israel and nothing could

eventually hinder His purpose. Jericho stood in the way and it must go. And go it did, for so God commanded.

No one ever trusted in vain. Faith, resting upon God's Word, honors Him and gratifies Him. The Hebrews of Paul's time were to go forward and go forth unto Christ "outside the camp". Faith will remove every obstacle in our way to complete obedience. What seems utterly impossible to man is possible with God. God's ways are not our ways. Our ways are directed to serving our own glory; God's ways are such as give the glory to Him (Judg. 7:2). To march in silence round an embattled city is folly to the military scientist. To shout is all very well, but senseless if one does not shout and strike. It is only faith that would take such utterly useless steps. But faith takes them, and the walls collapse. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

15. RAHAB'S FAITH (11:31) Josh. Ch. 2, 6:17; James 2:25)

In this chapter 11 of Hebrews, the author begins with Genesis, then turns over the O.T. Scripture almost page by page until he comes to the passage of the Red Sea. Then he leaps over to the conquest of Canaan recording nothing of the wilderness wanderings, for they were not of faith. This omission is unique and important. It is to show that unbelief and apostasy characterize the wilderness experience.

Two women are mentioned in this chapter as being among the heroes of faith; Sarah is linked to her husband Abraham as a conclusion of faith, and Rahab who is linked to Israel's obedience of faith as a conclusion.

The list of champions whose faith is particularly specified end with the Gentile woman Rahab. She was an outcast in Israel. But in her we see a significant foreshadowing of the universal bringing in of all the outcast Gentiles.

If faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) then Rahab is no exception to this fact, for she had heard (see Josh. 2:10-11; 5:1). The Song of Moses had predicted that this thing would come to pass (see Exod. 15:14-16). How could Rahab say: "I know that the Lord hath given you the land"? Only by faith in the word she had heard – the certainty and conclusion which the exercise of faith gave her. Rahab believed, the other inhabitants of Jericho did not.

a. In Spite of Her Faults "Rahab the harlot".

Many have stumbled at the fact that this woman was a moral derelict, and yet God would deal with her. Some have seen in the word zanah (harlot) merely an innkeeper. Mr. C.H. Welch in commenting on this says: "There is no necessity to soften down the language of Scripture. The grace that can save Saul the Pharisee, Matthew the publican, and the like, can save Rahab the harlot". We see here the sovereign grace of God which looks to her faith, not to her failures and faults. Did not our Lord say "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mk. 2:17).

Ethnically, she was a Gentile. She was an alien from the stock of Abraham. She was of the class that Paul speaks in Eph. 2:11-12 – "Gentiles in the flesh, ... being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel". She was further an Amorite, whom God had committed to destruction (Exod. 33:2). She was also as we have said before, a harlot. The Greek word used here namely, porneia, like the Hebrew word zanah, can only mean prostitution. Born and reared in heathendom this practice would not be unusual. It is the sinner who knows he is a sinner, that God deals with and accepts his faith in the Word of God. As a sinner she told a deliberate lie (see Josh. 2:4). God neither justifies nor condemns this sin. He commends her faith, and saves her on the basis of her faith. We believe her faith led to a clean life and good works. In every sinner faith must come first, then good works.

- b. Because of Her Faith – “By faith Rahab perished not”.

At grave risk of death at the hands of the king, paying the penalty of being a traitor, she put her trust in Jehovah by protecting His messengers. It was her faith alone that distinguished her from the rest of the inhabitants of Jericho, and saved her.

Her faith was saving faith. It was made possible by her placing faith in a scarlet thread (Josh. 2:18,21). How simple, yet how sure and sublime. Prior to binding this scarlet thread in the window she was ordained to destruction. But from the moment of the binding of this thread she was ordained to deliverance from destruction and destined to eternal life. As her faith was objective – believing what God said about Israel, and hanging the scarlet thread, so her salvation was founded upon an outward evidence, not an inward experience. In God’s Word there was perfection; in herself there was imperfection. The outward token gave her inward peace. Our salvation is in the finished work of Christ at Calvary, not in our human experience.

Her faith was also a sanctifying faith. “She dwelleth in Israel even unto this day” (Josh. 6:25). No harlot would have lived very long in Israel. God had given specific commandment against all such (see Lev. Ch. 20). Thus her life was sanctified and her faith brought to a holy relationship in the camp of Israel. Rahab became an ancestress of our Lord (Matt. 1:5).

So when the walls of Jericho tumbled and the city was taken, Rahab and her family are safe in the camp of Israel. So her apparently barren life is made fruitful for God and His cause.

We close this study of her faith by quoting from Mr. C.H. Welch – “Joshua chapter two and Hebrews 11:31 are not written to justify Rahab’s morals, but to bear witness to Rahab’s faith”.

16. SUMMARY OF FAITH’S VICTORS AND VICTORIES (Heb. 11:32-40)

When John had written his gospel, he concludes by saying: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they were written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). So the writer to the Hebrews had a similar dilemma as John, only his was time rather than space – “And what shall I more say, for the time would fail me to tell of” etc. (11:32).

These verses give us a historical survey of the achievements of faith. It is evident that faith can do whatsoever the will of God can do.

“Faith mighty faith and promise sees
And trusts in God alone
Laughs at impossibilities
And says: ‘It shall be done’”.

We have already passed in review the 12 distinct characters of Faith – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses’ Parents, Moses, Joshua and Jericho, and Rahab. Abraham comes in two different sections and with the faith of Israel in crossing the Red Sea, we have 14 examples in this section. What a challenging series of triumphs we have here. They cover every kind of difficult experience. They reveal that nothing is impossible to him that believeth – “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). God was always in contact with them and revealed His presence, His power, and His good pleasure.

- a. The Victors of Faith (32)

In this grouping of six individuals and one class (the prophets) there are five from that turbulent, violent period of the Judges; and one from the time of the kings, namely David.

The writer is apparently not presenting these six characters in chronological order because Gideon comes before Barak; Samson before Jephthah; and, David before Samuel.

Gideon, means “feller down” (Judg. Chs. 6-8)

Barak, means “Lightning” (Judg. Chs. 4-5)

Samson, means “Son-like” (Judg. Ch. 16)
Jephthah, means “He will open” (Judg. Chs. 11-12)
David, means “Beloved” (1 Sam. Ch., 16-1 Kgs. Ch.2)
Samuel, means “Ask of God” (1 Sam. Chs. 1-25)

There is a strange combination of individuals given here. Who would think of coupling together such men as Samuel and Samson, the judge who trifled with sin and sacrificed spiritual power. But here the writer makes no mention of his sin, only his great faith. These men were all of different types, in social position, morals, physique, culture. Yet they all had one unifying, dominating, conquering quality – FAITH IN GOD. These men defied dangers, defeated difficulties, overcame obstacles, won victories, and secured possessions.

b. The Victories of Faith (33-35)

We shall now see some of the public and private achievements accomplished by these persons of faith.

(1) By a subduing faith – “Who through faith subdued kingdoms”. The word translated “subdued” is “katagonizomai” and occurs only here in the N.T. It is not used in the LXX. This word has in it the word “agon” a wrestling. We think of Joshua’s conquest of Canaan, and David’s conquests of Syria, Moab, Amalek, Edom and the Philistines. They also subdued the kingdom of darkness in the spirit realm. Samuel and David had conflicts with Saul; Elijah with Ahab. They did not merely witness against evil; they stood also for the truth. They were true protestants – pro, meaning “for”, and testans, meaning “witness”. They witnessed for the truth.

(2) By a working faith – “wrought righteousness”. They asserted justice and right upon all sin and sinners. We see this in Elijah and the prophets of Baal; Micaiah against Ahab; Samuel and Saul; Daniel in Babylon.

(3) By an obtaining faith – “obtained promises”. We read of Abraham that “when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son” (Heb. 11:17). Abraham received two promises: one in Chaldea concerning the land (Acts 7:4); and one in Canaan concerning the seed (Gen. 15:5-7). These promises he accepted by faith. The promised land is bound up with the promised seed. David received the promise of a throne and a kingdom (2 Sam. Ch. 7). God promised the land to Joshua (Josh. 1:2-4). We too have great and precious promises in The Gospel of the Grace of God and the Revelation of the Secret”.

(4) By a protecting faith – “stopped the mouth of lions”. These words remind us of Samson, David, and Daniel (Judg. 14:6; 1 Sam. 17:37; Dan. Ch. 6). “My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me” (Dan. 6:22). The Devil is likened to “a roaring lion” (1 Pet. 5:8).

(5) By a delivering faith – “Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword”. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not fear the king (Dan. 3:27), but had faith: “He is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace”. It is better to be inside the furnace with God than outside with all the cares and criminals. Rahab, David, Elijah, and Jeremiah all escaped the sword (Josh. 6:21; Ps. 145:10; 1 Kgs. 19:10-14; Jer. 36:26).

(6) By a strengthening faith – “out of weakness were made strong”. Gideon was weak, but made strong (Judg. 7:11). Samson too was weak until the Spirit of God came upon him (Judg. 14:6,19; 15:14). The Prophets were made strong in the Lord: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel (Isa. 6:5; Jer. 1:6; Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 10:8). Saul of Tarsus increased in strength, confounding the Jews (Acts 9:22). In his latter years Paul could write: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). “Finally my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

(7) By a fighting faith – “waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens”. The path of faith is a path of conflict. The great conflict of the ages was started when God said: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed” (Gen. 3:15). God destroyed the nations of Canaan before the Israelites because of their satanic origin and character. “To him which smote great kings: for His mercy endureth forever; And slew famous kings, for his mercy endureth forever: Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth forever: And Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth forever: And gave their land for an inheritance, for his mercy endureth forever” (Psa. 136:17-21).

(8) By a resurrection faith – “Women received their dead raised to life again” (35). The examples of this are: Elijah and the woman’s son at Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:17-24). Elijah brings the son to life. Elisha and the Shunamite woman and her son (2 Kgs. 4:14-37). We note here that it doesn’t say: “Through faith” etc. It isn’t so much through their faith as it is now because of their faith.

(9) By a courageous faith – “and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection”. The word translated “tortured” is tumpanizo and means “beaten or cudged to death, stretched out like hide upon a drum and beaten. They could have been delivered by recanting their faith and apostatizing. These had faith in “a better resurrection”. There will be a resurrection after the 1000 year reign of Christ. But there will be one before the millennium. This is called “the first resurrection”. And “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5-6). We are told of an Eleasar, the Scribe in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, who rather than eat swine’s flesh, spit upon it and went to the instrument of torture (2 Macca. 6:19-31). A mother and seven sons were scourged and tortured by Antiochus. The second son, in the midst of torture said to Antiochus: “Thou miscreant, dost release us out of the present life, but the King of the world shall raise us up, who died for His laws unto an eternal renewal of life” (2 Macca. 7:9).

c. The Victims of Faith (36-38)

(1) In mockings and scourgings “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment”. Jeremiah was in bonds and imprisonment (Jer. 20:7; Lam. 3:14). Micaiah was hated and suffered (1 Kgs. 22:24). Nehemiah suffered from Sanballet and Tobiah (Neh. 4:1-4). “They mocked the messengers of God and despised His words and misused His prophets” (2 Chron. 36:16). Jesus speaks of beating, stoning, and killing the messengers, and slaying the son in His Parable of the Vineyard (Matt. 21:33). Paul did all this to the Christians of his time (Acts 8:3; 9:1; 22:4; 26:10-11).

(2) In cruel deaths. “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword”. Scripture gives nine cases of stoning: (a) The blasphemer (Lev. 24:14); (b) The Sabbath-breaker (Num. 15:36); (c) Achan (Josh. 7:25); (d) Abimelech (Judg. 9:53); (e) Adoram (1 Kgs. 12:18); (f) Naboth (1 Kgs. 21:13); (g) Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20-22); (h) Stephen (Acts 7:58); (i) Paul (Acts 14:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:25). Tradition has it that Isaiah was sawn asunder. The temptation spoken of here was not to commit any sin, but to abandon their faith and go back to their former legal religion. Or else they must bow before the emperor. Peter speaks of “the trial of your faith” (1 Pet. 1:7). In Heb. 11:34 we are told of some who “escaped the edge of the sword”; Here they are “slain with the sword”. One in his faith overcomes; the other suffers and succumbs in death. Jezebel slew the prophets (1 Kgs. 18:4; 19:10,14). Jerusalem killed the prophets (Matt. 23:37). Doeg, the Edomite, slew 85 priests with the sword (1 Sam. 22:18,21). John the Baptist and James were beheaded (Matt. 14:10; Acts 12:2).

(3) In Wanderings. “They wandered about in sheep skins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth”. They were driven out from the cities and from humanity to share the common lot of animals. Lack of proper clothing, they had to use skins of animals. Obadiah hid 100 prophets by 50 in a cave (1 Kgs. 18:4). In the days of the Maccabees they hid in dens and caves. “Of whom the world was not worthy”.

d. The Visions of Faith (39-40)

“That they might obtain a better resurrection” 11:35. “God having provided some better thing” (40).

There will come a great day, the consummation of faith when it will be perfected in the faithful.

(1) In a better resurrection – These all died in faith without having received the fulfillment, the perfection of the promise. They would have to wait until all had come in. The O.T. saints could not be perfected by any animal sacrifices; they had to wait for Christ and the New Covenant.

(2)

These Old and New Testament saints should sing: “O happy band of Pilgrims, look upward to the skies; Where such a light affliction, Shall win you such a prize”.

Someone has likened faith in God to David’s five smooth stones: God is; God has; God will; God can; and, God does.

(3) To a better country – In 11:16 we read: “They desire a better country”. The word here is patris, a fatherland. It occurs 8 times – once in Hebrews, and seven times in the Gospels. It refers to that New Jerusalem – that heavenly city prepared by God for all the overcomers.

So here we see the great value of faith. Here is what God thinks of it.

D. THE PERFECT RESPONSE (10:19 – 13:21)

LESSON # 14 - THE BETTER LIFE OF HOPE

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 12:1-29)

INTRODUCTION:

We have just reviewed the great company of the victorious heroes of faith; let us be inspired by them, running the race, looking to Jesus the supreme example of patient endurance (Vrs. 1-3). The present sufferings are the discipline of a loving Father, and are evidence of sonship. Be brave and help others to be the same (4-13). Beware of strife and impurity, taking warning from the life of Esau, who forfeited his blessing (14-17). There follows a further contrast between the Old and New Covenants (18-24); and a warning not to refuse Him Who speaketh from heaven (25-29).

The author has already introduced us to the matter of hope. In 10:23 he said: “Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised). The last verse of chapter 11 ended on the note of the prospective – “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (11:40). Chapter 11 may be looked upon as a sort of parenthesis and chapter 12 together with chapter 11 looks back to chapter 10:32-39.

The great danger that beset the Hebrews was that of “drawing back”, “growing weary” and to encourage them the Apostle gives three items: (1) The return of the Lord (10:37); (2) The O.T. examples of faith (Ch. 11); (3) The example of Christ (12:1-3).

I. ENDURANCE IN HOPE (1-4) The Race

Some feel that these verses should not have been separated from chapter 11, but form an integral part of that argument and presentation. While chapter 11 gives examples of those who had one or two aspects of faith, Christ is the One who is the summum bonum of faith. Christ is the Prince and Perfector of our faith. He offered a more excellent sacrifice than did Abel. He walked with God as Enoch never walked. He prepared an ark for the salvation of all as Noah never did. He was a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth as Abraham never was. He did His Father’s will as Isaac never did. He abided God’s time as Joseph never did. He refused all honor and glory of men and the Devil as Moses never could. He conquered and suffered as none other ever could have done. Because of this we are asked now to look to Him.

It is important that we understand the language that the Apostle uses here:

Witnesses (Gk. Martus). The word does not mean spectator, but one who bears witness, even to suffering and martyrdom. We get the word martyr from this word. Note the following passages: Rev. 1:5; 2:13; Heb. 10:15; 11:4. The words “martus”, “martureo” and “marturion” are found in Hebrews in the following passages: 3:5; 7:8; 7:17; 10:15; 10:28; 11:2,4,5,39; 12:1.

Cloud (Gk. Nephos). The word does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. The usual word for cloud being nephale. It was used among the Greeks for a great company. Homer, in the Iliad, has the line: “With him followed a cloud of footmen”. So also Herodotus and Euripides. The figure was also used by Roman writers. Livy has the line “peditum equitumque nubes – “a cloud of horse and foot”.

Patience (Gk. Hupomone). The only occurrences of this word in Hebrews are in 10:36 and 12:1. The word literally means “to remain under”. The simple form from “meno” “to remain” occurs six times in Hebrews – 7:3; 10:34; 12:27; 13:1,14.

Race (agon). This word means “a contest, a race, a conflict”. Note our English word “agony” – any contest or striving. The accompanying imagery is borrowed from the Greek games. See also 2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 9:24-25.

In these words we have the heart of the passage. It is a race, calling for endurance and patience; a race beset with peculiar difficulties, bringing prize, and motivated by a glorious Example.

1. The Path of Patience (Vr.1)

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us”. Some might ask: Why are we not released from this life immediately upon our conversion? The answer in part may lie in our chapter. There needs be a time of discipline, endurance, and education.

If we are going to endure and win in this race of life, two things are necessary: (1) “Lay aside every weight”; and (2) Lay aside “the sin which doth so easily beset us”. So there seem to be two sources of hindrance in the race: weights and sin. The first may not in itself be sinful. It may have been the loose flowing garment or excess flesh. To us it may be riches, home ties, pleasure, liberty. This refers to all external hindrances that may in themselves be good, but a hindrance in free, fast running. The second may be internal – the sins of the old nature that crop up and give us trouble in the race. See 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. Ch. 3.

2. The Prospect of Perfection (2-4)

“Looking unto Jesus the Leader and Finisher of faith”. “For consider Him”. While the great examples of faith given in chapter eleven can be an inspiration in the race, they are not the goal. For this we must gaze directly on the Lord – “the originator and perfecter of faith”. The word “looking” is “looking away”. We are to look away from all the weaknesses and hindrances to Him.

The word “author” is archegos, or Captain, as in Heb. 2:10. “Finisher” is “Perfecter”. So instead of drawing back into perdition these Hebrews are admonished to go forth to perfection (See again Chs. 3-4).

“Who for the joy that was set before Him”. The word “for” is the Greek word “anti”, usually translated “instead of”. Some have set forth the idea that our Lord gave up the joy He had in Heaven in order to “endure the cross”. But this cannot be so, neither in the near context, nor in the whole argument of this Epistle. It is for the goal, the prize, the joy ahead of Christ that He suffered and died. Otherwise this argument would have no point for these Hebrews. See again the examples of Abraham (11:10) and Moses (11:26-27). When we come to the study of Esau (12:16-17) we shall see that he exchanged future blessing for present satisfaction; whereas Abraham and Moses exchanged present immunity from suffering for pleasures at the right hand of God, which are eternal.

Our Captain and Perfecter of faith is said to have: “Endured the cross”, “despising the shame”, “endured contradiction of sinners”, “resisted evil unto blood”. So this “Captain and Perfecter of faith” embraces all the qualities exhibited in Heb. Ch. 11. Christ endured as none other has endured, refusing deliverance to save Himself and finally attained unto that “better resurrection” and exaltation to glory where He awaits the day of His manifestation and Second Advent. He is the altogether lovely One, the Chiefest among ten thousand. Here as in Col. Ch. 3 He is all in all.

“For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10). “Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). If it were thus with the perfect Son of God, how much more for all the sons which God is bringing to glory. So we are to look to Him who “endured the cross” and resisted unto blood.

II. EXHORTATION TO HOPE (5-17)

Under the endurance in hope we saw the athlete being tested for the race; now we are to see the son in the home being trained for the goal of perfection. The question seems to have arisen concerning all this suffering, sorrow, and struggle. The answer given is that all this leads to the education and endurance in faith. It has its salutary effect.

1. Discipline for Personal Development (5-11)

“My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” ... “God dealeth with you as with sons”.

The discipline through chastisement is here seen to be not judgment and punishment. It is not the schoolmaster or the policeman, but the father in the home. The words in verse five are quoted from Prov. 3:11-12.

“Discipline is a part of the moral process and training which God uses ‘in bringing many sons unto glory’. This comes in and thru the circumstances of life which are overruled for good in the lives of those souls who love the Lord and walk by faith” – John C. Page.

Chastening is not condemnation. Chastening is for sons, condemnation is for the sinner.

a. Its Meaning (5-8)

The discipline spoken of here is a proof of sonship. Discipline is based upon obedience, submission, and adjustment. Man as a sinner was disobedient, arrogant and proud. He had lived all during the past centuries a life of self-righteousness, self-gratification, self-indulgence, and self-satisfaction. Self, the ego was on the throne.

“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Vr. 6). This chastisement is all based upon the perfect love of God. Discipline reveals also that we are sons of God, not “bastards” or illegitimate children but real sons of God, our heavenly Father.

God’s dealing with sinners is far different from His dealing with His sons. He is not disciplining them toward some high and holy destiny. Many times sinners have some soft south winds blowing for them while the true sons are battling the tempest (See Acts 27). Here is a true test of our sonship. If we have no adversity whatever we may be “bastards” and not sons.

b. Its Motive (9-10)

“That we might be partakers of His holiness”.

Holiness is the atmosphere of Hebrews, as righteousness is of Romans. Sanctification like the work of redemption is of God. “Christ is made unto us sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

How is a raw recruit made into a soldier? How is he made to stand the test of enemy fire, and do exactly as told with courage, precision, and determination? Only by rigorous discipline. In the physical realm we had our earthly fathers who corrected us – “fathers of our flesh which corrected us”. And “they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure”. Or as the R.V. has it – “as seemed good to them”. Our earthly fathers had more or less a picture of what they wanted us to be, and disciplined accordingly. Even the best of them had but a few days to do their work. The author says “we gave them reverence”.

But God always does it for our profit. There is no ulterior motive except that we become sharers of His holiness. If then we gave response of veneration and respect to the defective discipline of our earthly fathers, what trustful and loving submission shall we not give the Father of our spirits. If He takes from us our health, our home, our wealth, our little empire, our best beloved; it must be for our good.

“Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will”.

c. Its Ministry (11)

“Nevertheless afterwards it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness”.

If we take the proper attitude toward chastening, which is submission, obedience, patience, we shall experience the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which is holiness or wholeness. Fruit is God’s purpose in all that He undertakes. It must be our experience too. Not trying to bear fruit, but just yielding that He might bring it forth within us. Many struggle, work, sweat, labor to appease God and bear fruit. He wants us to rest in Him, and He will through His Spirit bear fruit within us.

God is out to produce character and holiness like His own. If we are satisfied with less, He is not. “Be ye holy, for I am holy”. God will not have His children unlike Himself. What have I done to deserve all this, asks the repining soul? That is the wrong question. Rather ask, what is God making of me that requires all this? It is His purpose that in all things I be conformed to the image of His Son.

2. Discipline for Public Deportment (12-17)

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness”.

a. In our conduct toward others (12-14)

Here the author seems to return to the metaphor of the race – “hands” and “knees” and “feet” represent the powers of action, motion, and progression. These Hebrews must not faint in the presence of others. They must press on with resolute courage. We are to lift up the hands and strengthen the weak knees.

This appeal to avoid relaxed arms and weakened knees is directed against despondency. They were also to make straight paths for their feet, which means their conduct was to be straightforward. Depression and despondency will make us careless and indifferent to the life we ought to live. They were to be vigilant, being concerned both with the character of their heart within, and the conduct of their life without.

The word “follow” is the Greek word dioko. It means to pursue like the hunter and his game, or the runner and his race. “I press on” (Phil. 3:12-14).

“Peace” and “holiness” are closely associated in the Beatitudes – “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”. “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:8-9). “Peace” and “holiness” make for that happy future which hope brings. Our hope can never be happy unless it brings peace and holiness. “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18). “Seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:11) at whatever personal sacrifice.

God has gone to great lengths to secure holiness for us. The unspeakable sacrifice at Calvary in an evidence of this. A person may go to great lengths of endeavor, and yet not reach true holiness. It is not knowledge, Balaam had that; not great profession, Judas Iscariot had that; not morality and outward respectability, the Rich Young Ruler had that; not in keeping company with Godly men, Demas had that. Yet none of these were holy.

Someone has said: “God provides what He requires”. “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. This is a blessed truth. It is not the end, but the beginning of holiness. If Christ dwells within there will be constant conformity to His character, and holiness will ensue.

Isaiah chapter 35 has been called “The way of holiness” chapter. The Kingdom saints will have to walk on this highway in order to know holiness.

b. In our Conduct toward God (15-17)

There are three “lests” in these verses:

“Lest any fail of the grace of God”.

“Lest any root of bitterness spring up”.

“Lest there be any fornicator or profane person”.

The word “fail” in the first “lest” means to be wanting, to be in default, to be below standards, to come short of a privilege. “For the grace of God ... teaching us that ... we should

live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:12). The grace of God is our teacher in spiritual things, and will lead into a life of holiness. God’s unmerited favor or grace is the motive for walking in the path of holiness. We are apt to fall short of that which grace makes possible.

The peril of failure in grace leads to the peril of “bitterness”. The metaphor here is that of a poisonous plant. There is an allusion here to the words of Moses to his people: “lest there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood” (Deut. 29:18). Here Moses is warning against defection in the camp of Israel. It is amazing how defection can spread. It is like a malignant disease, before which holiness withers. This has to do with dissension, jealousy, or creating factions, or aggravating some unimportant issue – See Eph 4:31.

Then there follows the peril of becoming a “profane person”. The word “profane” is from the Greek bebelos, which is the opposite of hagios or holy. It is a character which is essentially secular rather than spiritual, having only earthly, materialistic values. Esau is here taken as an example. He is called a “fornicator” from the Greek word pornos. Dr. Bullinger says: “Fornication seems to be used of the sin of Idolatry in the Church in the N.R. as adultery is of the same sin with the Jews”. The English word “profane” comes from the Latin words pro-fanum. Outside every fane or temple there was an area open to every one. In contrast to this there was the sacred enclosure of the temple or “fane” itself. The idea is that Esau had no such sacred enclosure in his life; he was purely a secular man. In that one act of selling his birthright for a “morsel of meat”, he revealed his essential character. A profane person loves only the things of sense and time, and has no appreciation for the spiritual. Esau cared nothing for the blessings of the Covenant, the hopes centered in the Promised Seed of Abraham. The Bible reveals that the birthright, or primogeniture, contained many desirable privileges. The first-born son was consecrated to the Lord and given the right of the priesthood, a double portion of the Father’s estate, and Kingly dignity and authority over his brethren (See Gen. 27:28; Exod. 22:29; Deut. 21:17). Esau then went and married outside of the people of Israel for he “took his wives of the daughters of Canaan” (Gen. 36:2).

So then when Esau repented and sought again the blessing, it was gone forever. He could never have the first blessing; he must be satisfied with the second or lesser. He found no way to change his father’s mind through his tears.

Paul is here writing to those who were members of the “Church of the Firstborn”. They too were bartering away their birthright in the New Covenant for the Old Covenant which was passing away. This will now be further developed in the next section.

The obstacles to holiness are gathered up under two heads: Those which center in the man himself, his personal purity, and those which come from without, his public piety.

III. EVALUATION OF HOPE (18-29)

The Apostle is now going to set forth a description of the goal of their hope. The remainder of this chapter is therefore a summary of the arguments advanced in the first ten chapters as to the superiority of the New Covenant. The language here is more poetic and impassioned than any before, as is fitting a climax. Here are “thoughts that breathe and words that burn”. This chapter will now close the main argument. This is seen in the fact that the word “better” occurs here for the last time. It is found nine times in this Book (1:4; 3:3; 7:22; 8:6 (3); 9:11; 9:23; 12:24).

1. In Contrasting the Covenants (18-24)

The antithesis of the Old and New Covenants is in line with the contrasts found all through this Epistle. Now comes the final and culminating illustration – not Sinai, but Zion.

The Old Covenant:

Sinai, a tangible, earthly mountain, surrounded by gloom and storm.

The angels through whom the Law was given (Heb. 2:2; Gal. 3:19; Acts 7:53; Deut. 23:2) unseen by men, but operating in the winds and in the fire (Heb. 1:7).

Israel congregated under the mountain, afraid, and forbidden to touch it.

The Lord, unapproachable, shrouded in darkness or revealed in fire.

Moses, himself afraid, and not winning through mediation access for the people.

The blood sprinkled on the people to ratify the Old Covenant, but which could not cleanse the conscience.

The sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words inspiring fear.

The New Covenant:

Zion, radiant with light and crowned with the City of God.

Festal choirs of assembled angels.

The accepted Church of the Firstborn, with free approach to the Holiest of Holy.

The Judge of all, without His terrors, accessible, and awarding rest to the perfected.

The Divine availing Mediator.

The ever cleansing blood of complete atonement.

The voice of that cleansing blood, speaking of peace and pardon.

a. Mt. Sinai (The Old Covenant) 18-21

The main thought is that Mt. Sinai was marked by terrors; concerned with things material, and invoked a distance from God (See Exod. Chs. 19,20). The whole scene was prophetic of the relation that they would sustain to Jehovah under the legal system. The function of the Law was not to bring them near to God, but to convict them of their inability and unworthiness to do so. Moses himself said: "I exceedingly fear and quake".

The scene at Sinai was spectacular and brought a religion of externals – see, touch, taste, and smell. It was a sensuous, shadowy, and secluded religion. God came to Sinai in obscurity. He hid Himself in flame and storm. The Old Covenant was a shadowy, portentous manifestation of truth. God spoke here to one small nation gathered before Him on the plain, and separated by mountains and deserts from all other peoples of the earth. Sinai stands for terrible severity. At Sinai the lightning flashed, the thunder pealed, the trump of God sent forth its wild weird blast; the awful voice of the Almighty spoke the Ten Commandments. So Sinai could only inspire terror. It was indeed "the ministration of death" and of "condemnation" (11 Cor. 3:7-9). It "bore children unto bondage" (Gal. 4:22-25). This legal ceremonial system became an unbearable yoke – "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

The dispensation that came at Sinai was provisional and preparatory. It was only temporary until the Mediator of the New Covenant should come (See Jn. 1:17). Study carefully the following passages as Paul interprets the Law (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 7:6; 10:4; Gal. 2:16; 2:21; 3:13; 3:19; 5:4).

The Law manifested the majesty and holiness of God; His utter condemnation of sin; and the inaccessibility of God by means of the Law. Even Moses, the Divinely-appointed leader of the people could not approach without the utmost fear and trembling.

b. Mt. Sion (22-24) The New Covenant (See 2 Cor. 3:9,11)

Instead of the terrors of the Law, there are now the glories of grace; instead of the material and psychical, there are the spiritual; instead of distance, there is now access. The New Covenant is inward, supersensible, and experiential. The types and ceremonies of Sinai have passed away. Now there is righteousness within, not ritual without (See Heb. 8:10). Here there is serenity instead of storm clouds, no lightning flashes, and no thunder claps. The name "Zion" means "sunny". The "Sun of Righteousness" shines upon its towers and palaces, gilding them with brightness and beauty. The New Covenant is clear as the sun in its teaching.

Mt. Sion represents the ultimate home of redeemed Israel in the redeemed land. The Lord is present as He was in the Wilderness; but here He is the Light, rather than the lightning. Instead of being warned away for fear, the saints dwell near Him and enjoy the fruits of the Tree of Life, and the water of the river of life (See Rev. Chs. 21,22).

These blessings are all-embracing. Mount Sinai stands in the lonely and silent desert; Mt. Sion is the center of a populous city, whose teeming inhabitants are cosmopolitan.

S I N A I

1. Burned with fire.
2. Blackness and darkness
3. Tempest.
4. Sound of a trumpet.
5. Voice of Declarations.
6. Touching killed beast.
7. Sight was terrible.

Z I O N

1. City of the living God.
2. Innumerable company of angels.
3. General Assembly, Church of Firstborn.
4. God the Judge of all.
5. Spirits of just men made perfect.
6. Jesus, Mediator of New Covenant.
7. Blood of sprinkling.

By contrast with verse 18 – “Ye are not come” is seen the key thought of access, “Ye have come right up” (Vr. 22).

The blessings of Mt. Sion embrace:

“the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”. The city and Mt. Sion are inseparable. Both are the place of government and grace; the center of worship and service. Jerusalem’s foundation is in the holy mountain (Ps. 87:1). The city and the holy mountain are associated in Ps. 48:1. This is the “city which hath foundations whose Architect and Maker is God” (11:10).

“an innumerable company of angels”. Myriads of angels, a festal assembly. Many feel that “the general assembly” is to be associated with this “innumerable company of angels”. The word translated “assembly” is paneguris not Ekklesia. This was primarily a gathering for a festive occasion. At Sinai the presence of angels only added terror to the scene. The angels are not now dispensing a fiery law, but are holding a joyous assembly or festival. Angels mediated the Law at Mt. Sinai (Ps. 68:17; Deut. 33:2).

“Church of the Firstborn” – Israel was the “Church of the firstborn”. The word translated “Firstborn” is only here in the N.T. in the plural. It is used of Christ in Heb. 1:6. Israel as a nation is so called in Exod. 4:22. The firstborn in Israel were dedicated to God for His service (Exod. 13:1-2; 11-15). Later Levi was chosen for the service (Num. 3:11-13).

“And to a Judge, God of all”. This says that the One Who is the Judge of His people is also the God of them. This same truth is mentioned in 10:30; 11:16.

“the spirits of just men made perfect”. Under the Law the spirits of the just were never brought to perfection. For its rites brought nothing to perfection or finality. Perfection can only come in Christ, and for these Israelites through the New Covenant.

“And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant”. It is not now Moses, but Jesus Christ. It is through Him that all the blessings of the New Covenant are made good (9:15).

“And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel”. It is the blood of Christ upon which the New Covenant is enacted and consummated (9:13-14,19). The blood of Christ was shed on earth as was the blood of Abel; but instead of crying out for vengeance as was Abel’s (Gen. 4:10) it was the voice of grace even for His murderers.

As members of the Body of Christ in this dispensation we have an even higher place than these Hebrews were offered under the New Covenant. Our position is in the super-heavenlies with “all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies”. Under the New Covenant it is a coming to a city of God, and to God as a Judge.

2. In Challenging to Continue (25-29) (Haggai 2:1-9,20-21)

We have here the fifth parenthesis closing the series: against drifting (2:1-5); against disbelieving (3:7-14); against degeneration (5:11-6:20); and, against despising (10:26-39); and now here against departing (12:25-27).

a. The warning (25-27)

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. ... if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven”.

(1) Its Possibility (25) Here is a comparison with the Old Covenant again; showing the greater responsibility to heed Him that now speaks from Heaven, as over against the one who spoke on earth. Responsibility is increased in the New Covenant.

(2) Its Peril (26) Here again is a contrast between the Old and New Covenants (See Exod. 19:18; Hag. 2:6,21). This time God will shake both heaven and earth in that final cataclysmic shock that will rock our solar system. (See Isa. 24:19-29; 2 Pet. 3:11-13; Rev. 6:12-13).

(3) Its Purpose (27) The purpose is to sift and to test so that the transient elements may disappear and the permanent may remain (2 Pet. 3:10).

At Sinai Israel’s Polytheism was shaken (Exod. 20:3-4); also her Polygamy got a terrific blow (Ezek. 23:3,19-21).

The following unshakable things are seen in this book:

The fact of God’s being and character (Ch. 1).

The revelation of God in the person of Christ, the incarnation of a Divine Christ (Ch. 1) and the appearance of the true Man (Ch. 2).

The reality of Christ’s earthly personal experiences (Chs. 2-5).

The redemptive elements in Christ’s work (Chs. 5-7).

The provision of spiritual blessing in Christ (Chs. 7-10) – His death, resurrection and ascension.

The possibility in human life of all things, that pertain to life and godliness, being realized through faith (Ch. 11).

The certainty of the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the revelation of the Lord from Heaven to usher in and establish His kingdom (Ch. 12).

b. The Wish (28-29)

“Let us have grace, ... to serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear”.

Grace, when it is exercised by the believer, signifies a deep sense of gratitude for the favor bestowed (See 1 Tim. 1:12). The source of every blessing is always the grace of God, and we should respond in kind. The service of God is always to be done with reverence and awe because God is a God of holiness.

“For our God is a consuming fire”. Here the author quotes from Deut. 4:24. See also Psa. 21:9; 2 Thess. 1:8). It was said of Christ that He would “baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and FIRE” (Matt. 3:11). For the believer fire destroys merely the dross, the combustible (See 1 Cor. 3:11-15). Fire is the means of Divine judgment in condemnation to the unbeliever; but to the believer it is cleansing in holiness.

Fire destroys – It burns up all the combustible, such as “wood, hay, and stubble”. Fire also purifies – It takes the dross from the precious metal. The word for “fire” is the Greek word pur. This is near akin in both root and sound to our “pure” from the Latin purus. The nature of God destroys all impurity. Fire also fertilizes – it destroys all that is noxious that the good and beautiful may flourish.

D. THE PERFECT RESPONSE (10:19 – 13:21)

LESSON # 15 - THE BETTER LIFE OF LOVE

SCRIPTURE: (Hebrews 13:1-21)

INTRODUCTION:

This Epistle concludes with various exhortations in regard to social life (1-3); marital life (4); material life (5-6); spiritual life (7-17), in which connection the readers are exhorted to follow steadfastly the example and doctrine of their former guides (7-16), and to respect the authority of their present rulers (17). The writer requests their prayers (18-19); he prays himself on their behalf (20-21); he sends greetings and utters his benediction (22-25).

“Let brotherly love continue (he Philadelphia meneto). Paul concludes his treatise to the Hebrews on this supreme virtue of all, namely, love. But there are specialties of love. Here it is “brotherly love”. There was a city in Asia Minor called, Philadelphia; so called from Attalus II, who was famed for his loyalty and devotion to his brother Eumenes. “All ye are brethren” (Matt. 23:8), said our Lord to His disciples; and again, “A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another” (John 13:34).

I. LOVE’S ACTIVITIES (1-6)

“Let brotherly love continue”. This affection existed among them (See 6:10; 10:34). This is not a new admonition, but the maintenance of an old one. However, it can be imperiled. There are many things to hinder and check the growth of “brotherly love”. There is much diversity of opinion. We are each gifted with individuality; we look at things from different viewpoints; we arrive at different conclusions. Difference of opinion can often lead to coldness and estrangement. Misunderstandings arise that often are very trivial; but can blight the love one for another. But this “brotherly love” can be maintained. Our love must be as broad as the brotherhood. “Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness” (Eph. 6:24).

1. Towards Mankind (1-3)

a. Strangers (2) – Hospitality was a distinct oriental virtue. It was regarded as a religious duty by the Arabs and the Romans. In the early days of the church, inns were scarce and most of them unattractive. They were places of immorality. So Christians were admonished and obligated to open their homes to fellow-believers, fleeing persecution or just travelling from place to place. “Given to hospitality” says Paul in Rom. 12:13. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan our Lord gives a perfect example of hospitality (Luke 10:33-37). The Children of Israel received instruction concerning the stranger: “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exod. 22:21).

Hospitality can be a thrilling experience and very rewarding, rich in return. “for thereby some have entertained angels”. The writer no doubt has reference to Abraham (Gen. Ch. 18); to Lot (Gen. Ch. 19); to Gideon (Judg. 6:18,22); and to Manoah (Judg. 13:15-16). See also Matt. 10:40; 25:40). A bishop or elder must be “given to hospitality” (1 Tim. 3:2).

b. Sufferers (3) - “{that are in bonds, ... them which suffer”.

Many were placed in bondage or imprisonment for their belief. These were not to be forgotten. They were to consider them as it they too were in bonds and suffered adversity. We are to “weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15) and to “bear ye one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2). “As being yourselves also in the body”. They were not beyond the reach of

persecution, suffering, and imprisonment. In our land, we are protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees religious liberty. But sinister forces are seeking to do away with this liberty. We too may see the day when we will suffer for our faith.

2. Towards Marriage (4)

There were two erroneous ideas relative toward marriage in Paul's day as there is today. The Essenes practiced celibacy; and the Epicureans lived in sexual promiscuity. "Marriage is honorable in all". Marriage is a sacred institution as well as a social institution. It leads to the Mystery of Marriage. How shall the Ephesians, brought up in a cult of sexual abandonment, be taught the purity, fidelity, and honor of the marriage relation? The answer is: "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; ... so ought men to love their wives". And again, "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church" (Eph. 5:25,23,28). "Husband, wife; Christ, the Church". This is the blessed analogy. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge". God has ways of judging these sins, even in this life – by social diseases or exposed to public scandal.

Nobly and faithfully did Bishop Latimer act when to the licentious and adulterous Henry VIII he presented a Bible, wrapped in a napkin bearing the solemn sentence – "fornicators and adulterers God will judge".

The latter days will bring laxity in the marriage relation (see 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

3. Towards Money (5-6)

"Let your manner of life be without the love of money".

"without covetousness" is literally "without the love of silver" (aphilarquros is a combination of three words – a, "not"; Philos, "love"; arguros, "silver").

"The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). A believer must be on his guard when prosperity comes his way (Ps. 62:10). The love of money, or covetousness involves a variety of evils and moral dangers – "temptation, snare, foolish and hurtful lusts, destruction and perdition, erred from the faith, many sorrows" (See 1 Tim. 6:9-10).

"content" is the word arkeo. In Luke 3:14 it is used of wages, and in 1 Tim. 6:8 of food and raiment. Contentment is to be desired above all else. We always have the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". We can trust both God's presence and provision. "The Lord is my helper". This is worth more than all the wealth of the world. Covetousness and contentment cannot live together.

Everything turns on love. Love out of place or spent on the wrong object is at the bottom of all evils. For false love see 2 Tim. 3:2-4; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5.

II. LOVE'S ATTITUDES (7-19)

Passing from admonitions bearing upon their individual lives, the writer now proceeds to exhort them about matters and attitudes arising out of their church relations.

1. Towards Leaders (7,17)

The words "rule" in these verses is the Greek word hegeomai, meaning "to lead, to go before, to rule, to command, a prince of regal power". These were the bishops and elders of the early church.

Two things are to be done for two different classes of leaders: Remember and esteem the past leaders; and obey the present leaders. Scripture everywhere recognizes the living power of a great example (See 6:12). These past leaders may have been the whole list of the faithful in chapter 11, and also Peter, James, Stephen, Philip, etc. They must not only remember these past leaders, but now they must "obey" their present leaders. The memory of these men would have a sanctifying influence on those who remembered their faith, and would act as a powerful deterrent or restraint as they were now ready to apostatize.

a. Remember the Past Leaders (7)

Three elements enter into the memory of these guides: The word they spoke; the faith they exercised; and, the life they lived.

“Who have spoken unto you the word of God”. The rule of these guides is the rule of the Word of God. The main function of the ministry is to preach the Word of God. It was Dr. John Hall who said: “No minister shall have lived in vain if it can be written over his grave: ‘He made the people understand the Scriptures’”.

“Truth through personality” is the definition of preaching and teaching according to Phillips Brooks.

“Whose faith follow”. “Imitate their faith” not their manner of life, nor their personal technique in service. The development of faith takes in the whole personality. It is always the safe way. It will not make assembly line models of us. It was their faith that made them pleasing unto God, and made them overcomers.

“Consider the end of their conversation”. “Viewing attentively the result of their conduct”. The idea here is that these leaders had so lived by faith, subjectively and objectively, that they had come to the end of their life with joy. The word “end” here in verse 7 is ekbasis. It occurs in 1 Cor. 10:13 – “a way of escape”.

b. Remember the Present Leaders (17)

“Obey your present leaders, and be submissive”. The leaders were never to be “lords over God’s heritage” (1 Pet. 5:3). They were to obey and be submissive to the word spoken. They are to do this because “they watch for your souls”. This is the picture of a shepherd watching over his flock, to lead to green pastures and to protect.

These guides must give an account of their ministry. The overseer must ever carry on his work in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ, where he will give account of his service, its motives and its methods (See Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 4:5). When a minister is faithful to the Word, then the hearer must obey and submit to that word.

2. Towards the Lord (8)

Immediately following the reference to the leaders, and immediately before the warning not to be carried away with divers and strange doctrines, comes this glorious passage: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and unto the ages”. This same truth lies at the beginning of the Epistle: “They shall perish; but Thou remainest. ... They shall be changed, but Thou art the same” (Heb. 1:11-12).

Through all the changes in this creation, both past and future, the Lord remains unchanged. Throughout all the changes in the dealings of God with men, the decaying and waning of the Old Covenant as well as of the old creation, there is One who remains the same.

This is the bed-rock of faith. This was the issue of the life of the leaders whose faith was to be followed. This was the corrective against the divers and strange doctrines which they were to avoid. These words are parallel with the titles “Alpha and Omega”, “Which was and which is and which is to come”. (Rev. 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13).

In the yesterday, we know that Abraham saw the Day of Christ; that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Christ is the Unchangeable One; the “Rock of Ages” (Isa. 26:4). This One has passed through many and varied experiences. He existed, originally in the form of God (Phil. 2:6). He took the “form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). He assumed human nature in an indissoluble union with His divine nature. He passed into the state and realm of death. He arose and ascended to Heaven. In all this He is essentially the One and the same person.

Moses, who could not lead the people into the Promised Land, is gone; Joshua, who could not give Israel rest in the land, is gone. But this One who was with Israel in Egypt, in the

Wilderness Wanderings, and their Captain under Joshua to battle for them, is the same today. He is now the ascended One Whom Paul saw in his conversion experience. He will be the same in the ages to come.

3. Towards the Legal System (9-14)

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan” (Josh. 1:2). These are the words spoken to young Joshua, the new leader of Israel after Moses death. They were now to follow Joshua. There is a similarity with this passage in Hebrews. There is now the call to leave the Old Covenant and come entirely to the New.

Why cannot the ancient ritual be maintained alongside belief in Jesus Christ? Would not more Jews support the new faith if the new faith honored the temple and its priesthood? Certainly the use of ordinances, observance of days, and the eating and not eating of certain meats would induce discipline, piety, order, and sanctification. But beware, urges this author. Such admixture can only lead to bondage, not liberty. Look at the Pharisees! They love the niceties of the Law; they are punctilious in their religious fervor and worship. Yet what did it all profit them? It was upon these very men that our Lord pronounced His woes, calling them hypocrites and whited sepulchers, scheming demons, blind leaders of the blind, destitute of all spiritual understanding, incapable of discerning true values. If religious performance can produce nothing better than what the Pharisees reveal, then it is valueless.

a. The New Principle Declared (10-12)

“With grace, not with meats”.

Here is Moses verses Christ; the material verses the spiritual; the earthly verses the heavenly; the temporal verses the eternal; the passing verses the abiding; and the partial verses the perfect and permanent.

“Not with meats” – “Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established ... not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein”. See also Heb. 9:8-10. “Meats” stand for all the ceremonial offerings under the Law. Our author declares that the whole Old Economy was completely done away. There is now no profit in it. In this Judaic system which leads to “divers and strange doctrines” one finds every cult which is based upon the legal system. Every prophet or preacher which seeks to impose certain ritual, legal duties such as Sabbath-keeping, is false and leads to bondage. The New Covenant standing in Christ has no time for “meats” and shadows (1 Cor. 8:8; Rom. 14:17-18).

“But with grace” – Grace is God’s meritless favor manifested and ministered in Jesus Christ (See Rom. 10:4). It is grace through Christ taught in the Gospel of the Grace of God that can establish the heart; because it is the only way a sinner can be made perfect. Grace is now reigning through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:21). It sits upon the throne and exercises dominion in the lives of men, not by means of ordinances, but “by Jesus Christ our Lord”. Grace is a direct operation – “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). It is not an old patch, or even a new patch, on an old garment; but a new garment. When anyone from another country comes to the U.S.A. and becomes a citizen here, he is no longer under any law of his former land. His full allegiance is to his new citizenship. If we are now Christ’s then our loyalty is to Him, not to Moses.

b. The New Parallel Drawn (10-12)

“For the bodies of those beasts, ... are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate”. “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which are serving the tabernacle” (Vr. 10). From this verse it is evident that the temple was still standing, and there was an altar at which the priests could not eat. The word translated “serve” is a present participle.

Some say that this altar refers to The Lord's Supper; others say to The Cross of Christ. But it cannot refer to either. The cross is a symbol of shame (Gal. 3:13). Matt. 23:19 declares the altar to be greater than the gift upon it; and that the altar sanctifies the gift. The cross was never greater than the One who hanged upon it.

The carcasses of the Levitical Offerings were not all disposed of in the same manner. Some were wholly consumed on the altar; these were the burnt offerings (Lev. 1:2-9). Of others the fat was burnt on the altar, while the flesh was eaten by the priests and the Levites (Lev. 8:22-31). So it was also with the peace offerings.

But the sin-offering was of another nature. The priest did not partake of the flesh. There was no eating. All was consumed by fire (Lev. 4:12,21). It was burned "outside the camp" (Lev. 4:21; 6:30; 16:11,14-16,27).

"Wherefore Jesus also, ... suffered without the gate" (Vr.12). His was the precious blood that is received in the Holy of Holies in Heaven. The sin bearing Lamb could not accomplish His redemptive sufferings in the sacred courts of the temple.

The carrying of the carcass of the sin-offering outside the camp was a mark of shame. Out there were the outcasts, the lepers. His sacrifice outside the city wall meant that He now abrogated the entire service of the temple, as of no further value in the face of an accomplished redemption. Out there is also opened wide the gates of salvation to the world – the leper, Samaritan, the Barbarian as well as the Jew.

c. The New Procedure Directed (13-14)

"Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For we have here no continuing city, but seek one to come".

Forsaking the old – He suffered without the gate. He became that kind of sin-offering that Judaism is forbidden to eat. He suffered to separate the people with His own blood. This going forth outside the camp was contrary to all Jewish ideas of religion. All outside the camp were ceremoniously unclean. Yet the Jews had delivered Christ into the hands of the Gentiles, who were unclean in the sight of the Jew. To obtain salvation in Christ was therefore impossible inside the camp of Judaism.

Forging on to the new – "Let us go on" is the burden of this Epistle. "Here we have no continuing city". This world with all its religion offers no abiding system, no unchanging organization. That which abides is both spiritual and heavenly in Christ.

So these Hebrews are called upon to follow the new principal – "Grace, not meats". They must see the great parallel between the typical old, and the substance of the new. They must be willing to proceed with forsaking the old and forging ahead in the new. The old camp had its glories, but outside the camp with Christ has greater glories.

4. Towards the Lip and Life (15-16,18-19)

There can be a true worship of God without the temple at Jerusalem with its altar and system of sacrifices.

a. Service of our lips (15,18-19) "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise". "Pray for us". Continual praise and prayer to God are always commendable exercises of true worship. This request for prayer argues a confidence in their faith and mutual love, without which he would not have requested their prayers. The prayers of the weakest saint may be useful in God's sight for the blessing of an apostle. Praise and prayer would indicate their attitude toward his admonition and exhortation. Paul requests prayer because of the purity of his conduct – "We have a good conscience, ... willing to live honestly".

- b. Service of our lives (16). Doing good and communicating the glad tidings are sacrifices well-pleasing unto God. The word translated “communicate” is koinonia and suggests sharing with a brother in material things. These Hebrews were persecuted and had lost many of their earthly possessions, hence the need to share. God is always well-pleased with the spoken witness and the practical material kindnesses.

Paul felt that this dual service would enhance and hasten his restoration to them the sooner (19).

III. LOVE’S ADJUSTMENT (20-21)

“Make you perfect in every good work to do His will”.

The Greek word which has been translated “perfect” is the word katartizo. It occurs some 13 times in the N.T. It has been translated by such words as “mending, hast perfected, perfectly joined together, restore, prepared, and framed”. Its first occurrence is in Matt. 4:21, where it is translated “mending their nets”.

The Apostle having earnestly requested the prayers of these Hebrews for himself, proceeds to plead for them at the throne of grace in this benediction. “Pray for me, and I will pray for you”.

1. By The God of Peace

This is a Pauline expression. Outside of the book it occurs only in Paul’s writings. He is the “God of Peace” in His own character and being. He is peace personified. There is not a disturbing element in His being. He loves peace and dwells with it, within and without.

He is the “God of peace” in His moral administration. The end towards which He works is peace, within the hearts of men, and also without in the world at large. These Hebrews were in a state of religious persecution and also political turmoil. But the rainbow of His grace is over them, and He will bring peace – through Christ, the Prince of Peace. Pride, anger, jealousy, remorse, fear, and forebodings agitate and alarm us; but have no existence in Him. God who is infinitely pure and perfect, is also infinitely peaceful. He gives peace to men through the forgiveness of sin (See Luke 7:48,50). We also have peace through the cross and blood of Christ (See Eph. 2:13-17; Col. 1:20).

2. By the God of Power – He “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus”. The God who can raise the dead can do anything. He can make of a Jacob, an Israel or Prince with God; of a Simon, impulsive and impetuous, a Peter who is strong and dependable.

This “blood of the everlasting covenant” is the New Covenant as over against the Old or the Legal System. This New Covenant is based upon the death and resurrection of the Lord.

He is called “that great shepherd of the sheep”. He is also called “the good shepherd” (John 10:11) and “the chief shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4). See also Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:12, and Ps. 23). As the “great Shepherd” He makes provision for their needs, and gives protection from all danger (Ps. 23). “God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory” (1 Pet. 1:21).

3. By The God of Perfection – “Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight”. Not only does God give us a perfect example in Christ, and a perfect standing in Him, but in experience He is working in us to make us well-adjusted or perfected to do His will. He not only works “for us” but also “in us”. His purpose is to make us like Christ (Rom. 8:29). This is life’s highest goal – “perfect, to do His will”. And this is all made possible “through Jesus Christ”.

E. THE EPILOGUE (Hebrews 13:22-25; 8:1)

LESSON # 16 – “THIS IS THE SUM”

INTRODUCTION:

The Apostle has already said “Amen” (Vr. 21). So these concluding verses seem to be a second and briefer postscript. The Apostles loving heart lingers long over the close of the letter, and prolongs its last words.

“This is the sum” (8:1) declares the writer when he is but halfway through the Epistle; but the statement is as appropriate at the close. The contrast and comparison between Christ and all others is now complete. He is “better” than angels, than Moses, than Joshua, than Aaron, and even the great antitype Melchisedek.

I. CONCLUDING REMARKS (13:22-25)

1. As Seen in His Exhortation (22)

“brethren, suffer the word of exhortation”. The word translated “suffer” is anecho, “to bear with or endure”. These words refer to the whole Epistle which is hortatory or advisory, rather than didactic or consolatory. The exhortation is to an unflinching loyalty to Christ. The Apostle might have enforced his request by many weighty reasons, but he mentions just the one – brevity of the Epistle – “written a letter in few words”.

“Few words” are compared with:

- a. The extent and importance of the subject.
- b. His own burning interest in it.
- c. The gravity of the crisis in relation to their spiritual life.

And what a marvel of condensation it is! Here is a wealth of holy thought, lucid exposition and argument, singular spiritual elevation and a living power.

2. As Seen in His Explanation (23)

“brother Timothy is set at liberty”.

We see here that the writer knew Timothy well. He knew that Timothy had been a prisoner, and was now set free. It was possible that Timothy would reach him soon. In that case they would visit the believers together.

3. As Seen in His Salutation (24-25)

“Salute all them that have the rule”.

“They of Italy salute you”.

“Grace be with you all. Amen”.

He honors the leaders by sending the salutation first to them. This greeting apparently comes from Italy, and from the Italian brethren. Spiritual love is international. It is cosmopolitan. Wherever Christians are, our hearts should warm to them.

“Grace be with you all”. This same form of blessing is used by Paul at the close of every one of his thirteen letters. None of the other N.T. writers use this expression. This final adieu is brief, but it could not be richer or more comprehensive. The word grace suggests every spiritual blessing in Christ – efficacious grace, preventing grace, co-operating grace, habitual grace. Grace blesses with forgiveness and restoration. It purifies from sin. It comforts amid sorrow. It strengthens for duty and it ripens into glory.

II. CONCLUDING RESUME (8:1)

“This is the sum”. The word translated “sum” is the Greek word kephalaion, and can be translated “the head”, hence the chief thing, the main point. In this verse it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest – “we have such”. This is it. There is none other, and so if we go back to the shadows we do away with Him and His work.

1. As Seen in the Better Person

Our Lord is to be compared and contrasted with some of the greatest personages and institutions in all the universe.

a. Better than angels

“Being made so much better than angels” (1:4). This is the first contrast that is made. Christ is greater in His divine dignity. Lofty though angels be, they are in every way inferior to Jesus Christ – the outshining of God’s glory and the exact image of His substance. If they are called “sons of God” it is in a sense which does not touch the unique, native sonship of our Lord, proclaimed by Divine decree. If they do not share the grossness of our mortal bodies, they are yet creatures, obeying the commands of the changeless, timeless Creator, our Lord Jesus. They are servants of the throne (1:14). Christ is its occupant. They speed on errands of ministry for the heirs of salvation; while He sits as their Lord “on the right hand of the majesty on high”. Jesus Christ is God, the Son, the Creator, the King, and the Head. So He is better than angels in His divine dignity.

Christ is also greater than angels in His human relationship. Whenever angels minister to human-kind it is done as creatures of a different order than mankind. But Christ is one with us (Heb. 2:14). He accomplished a service which one could render only as one with us. Stooping to our flesh, He was “in all things ... made like unto his brethren”. He was “tempted in all things like as we are without sin”. Suffering, humiliation, and death were his lot. He became “a merciful and faithful High Priest, touched with the feelings of our infirmities”.

b. Better Than Moses

“For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (3:3). It seems almost irrelevant to speak of Moses with reference to Christ after speaking of angels. For after all Moses was a mere man. But for these vacillating, back sliding Hebrews it is most important, for they were still trusting in Moses.

He introduces Moses with the words: “Moses was faithful in all his house” (3:2). The superiority of Christ is presented from the side of office and relationship rather than character.

Christ is better than Moses as the Builder of the House. So Jesus Christ is a Builder! We know Him as the Builder of the Universe, but that is only a step in the building of The Kingdom of God. This building is not done in a moment, but is the work of the ages. Moses can be only a stone in the structure, while Christ is the architect and builder. He is also better as the Son in the House. Moses is but a servant; Christ is the Son. Although Moses is neither a bond-servant, nor a hired servant, nor a household servant, but one rendering free voluntary service; he must bow to the “heir of all things”.

2. As Seen in the Better Priesthood

“Called an High Priest after the order of Melchisedek”.

The mosaic priesthood was after the order of Aaron, but Jesus after the order of Melchisedek. This priesthood has a better character. It combines the regal with the priestly. Christ is a King-Priest. He is a priest upon the throne, bringing to His priestly office all the ethical values suggested in the title, “King of righteousness, then King of peace”. Like Melchisedek’s, Christ’s was a timeless order, independent of genealogies, uninterrupted by the intrusions of death.

Long before the Aaronic priesthood under Moses, was ever established, Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedek, and bowed to receive his benediction. Even Levi was in Abraham when this took place. This priesthood has also a better covenant. The Old Covenant was formed on the basis of the Law: “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not”. The promise was based upon a blessing for obedience, and a curse for disobedience. The New Covenant lifted the burden of the Law from the shoulders of men, and then laid it on Jesus Christ. The old legal system would now be voided, and in its place God would give a new heart with a new power to keep the covenant. In this new covenant in Christ there would come a new communion available for all, not only the privileged few in Israel. Here was a covenant set in grace, not in Law. There is also a better sanctuary. The priests of the Levitical order had an earthly sanctuary. It was built according to the pattern given Moses on the mount, and was a representation of things in the heavens. But it was still of “the earth, earthy”. Solomon declared that even the magnificent temple he built could not contain God (1 Kgs. 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6). Paul reminded the Athenians that “God dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). So the O.T. priests could in no sense ever come into the presence of God. But Jesus ascended into the heavens, and dwells far above the heavens, and ministers before the face of God. His priesthood is greater than the Mosaic order as the heavens surpass a woven curtain; and as the throne of God exceeds in glory a box of human craftsmanship. His sanctuary is the throne of His glory. It has finally, a Better Sacrifice. “For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: ... this man have somewhat also to offer” (Heb. 8:3). But He did not come to offer the inadequate and ineffective offerings of the priests who were before him. “When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepare me” (10:5). Instead of the carcasses of bulls and goats, and heifers, He received a body prepared for Him. The priests offered what cost them nothing; but He offered that which cost Him everything. He “through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot unto God” (9:14). His body was the instrument of that perfect sacrifice. The offerings of the former priesthood were multiplied without number. This in itself made them ineffective. But Christ “offered one sacrifice for sins forever” (10:12). The finality of His offering declares its efficacy.

3. As Seen in the Better Product

“he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26)

The worshipper now can be cleansed and free from all sin. We are told that “Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Heb. 10:11). “In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again of sins every year” (10:3). “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (10:12). The best that the old sacrifices could do was to offer a ceremonial cleansing. In Jesus Christ the cleansing became effectual and real.

“Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain;
But Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our guilt away,
A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they”.

We are also sanctified and perfected. “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. “For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10,14). The product of His priesthood is a worshipper permanently settled in right relation with God, for fellowship, service and obedience. This standing of perfection makes possible our drawing nigh to God. It gives access to the Holy of Holies above. No admittance was the sign on the veil to the earthly Holy of Holies. But the veil, the body of Christ, was rent on Calvary, and a “new and living way” opened for all.

4. As Seen in the Better Practice

There is a practical side set into the many warnings of this Epistle. There can be a fatal drifting. The example of the Israelites who fell in the Wilderness are meant to stir up to a holy determination to go on, and not fall short of the grace of God (12:15). We must abandon every other trust and trust in Him alone. So there is a faithful duty to perform as seen in the following: “... boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (10:19). “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (10:22). “But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (13:16). We are taught the way of faith – “the just shall live by faith” (10:38). This was ably demonstrated by the saints of old who were witnesses of heavenly realities. There was the worship of faith in Abel, the walk in Enoch, and the witness in Noah; also in Abraham, in Moses, and finally in the Lord, “who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2). “Looking unto Jesus the Captain and Perfector of our faith”.

So the message of this Epistle is this: We have a better Person, engaged in a better Priesthood, securing a better Privilege that calls for better practices, and point to a better prospect – “to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen”.

Let us heed the exhortations: To give increasing heed to the things of Christ; to hold fast our full confession (3:6; 10:23); to draw near to God with boldness through Christ (10:19-25); to give diligence to enter into rest of the established faith in Christ (4:11); to press on to full growth or perfection, and be teachers of others (5:11-6:1); to watch in love over other believers, and not forsake our own (10:24-25).