

# INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

The *key word* of this Letter is GREATER! To prevent some from turning away from Christ and returning to the Law of Moses, the writer of this Letter shows: (1) The Son is *greater* than the prophets! (2) The Son is *greater* than the angels! (3) The Son is *greater* than Moses! (4) The Son is a *greater* High Priest than Aaron, because He is in the priestly order of Melchizedek! (5) The New Covenant is *greater* than the Old Covenant! It demands more and promises more! (6) If you *turn away* from the Son, you have NOWHERE to go! To abandon Christ is to abandon God!!!

The Jewish leaders tried to discredit both the Messiahship and Divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth. The *excuse* they gave for this was: (1) He was a *man*, a mere human being; (2) He had no earthly kingdom (which they expected the Messiah to have), and he was put to death; (3) He became a man by being born a helpless baby. They seemed to think the Messiah would suddenly appear - *full grown* (compare *John 7:27* and note); (4) Because he was tempted and suffered, just as we all do. *Hebrews* answers these questions, and should forever take away the "offensiveness of the Cross!"

The only question about this Letter is: "Who wrote it???" Did Paul write it? Probably, but no one can know for sure. It is not signed, as Paul's letters were. *Origen* wrote in the early part of the Third Century: "If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the Apostle, but the phrasing and composition are those of some one who remembered what the teacher had said. If then any church holds this Epistle [Letter] to be Paul's, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have our predecessors handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the Epistle, in truth God knows. The account that has reached us is, that some say it was writ-

ten by Clement who became bishop of the Romans, while others ascribe it to Luke, the author of the Gospel and Acts." This whole question of the authorship is examined in great detail in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*.

When was it written??? From *Heb. 10:1-2* we infer that the Temple was still standing and the sacrifices of the Law were still being offered. *R. Milligan* thinks Paul wrote it during the first imprisonment at Rome. *Ramsay* gives 62 A.D. as the year of Paul's release, so it would be around that time. *Heb. 13:23* seems to verify both that date and the authorship of Paul.

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE HEBREWS

## God's Word through His Son

**1** In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end. <sup>3</sup>He shines with the brightness of God's glory; he is the exact likeness of God's own being, and sustains the universe with his powerful word. After he had made men clean from their sins, he sat down in heaven at the right side of God, the Supreme Power.

## The Son Greater than the Angels

<sup>4</sup>The Son was made greater than the angels, just as the name that God gave him is greater

## The Son Superior to Angels

**1** In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

1. **In the past God spoke.** God did not disclose his will to the ancients *all at once*, but in "bits and pieces." With only a few exceptions (such as Melchizedek, Balaam, and Job), God spoke only to the prophets of the Jewish Nation. One part of God's will was to be learned from one prophet, another part would come through a different one. Over 1,500 years passed, from Moses to Christ. The Old Testament was not complete until the last word of Malachi was written.

2. **But in these last days.** Peter identifies the *last days* as beginning on Pentecost (*Acts 2:16-17*). **He has spoken.** The importance of the message is shown by the Messenger! Not a prophet, but the Son of God! Paul says this to show us that the Good News, spoken *all at once* through Christ (and his apostles, *John 14:26*), was complete and no additions would ever be made to it. Compare what Paul says in *Gal. 1:6-9*. [The New Testament records in permanent form the Good News which came through Christ.] **Through whom God created.** Compare *John 1:3*; *Col. 1:15-20*. **The universe.** See *verse 10*; *Heb. 11:3*. **Whom God has chosen.** This must be understood in view of *1 Cor. 15:24-28*.

3. **With the brightness.** See *John 1:14*; *Matt. 17:1-9*. **The exact likeness.** See *1 John 1:1-4*. **And sustains the universe.** As Creator, Christ spoke the universe into existence, and all things (*Col. 1:17*) have their proper place in union with him, as he sustains them with the same powerful word by which he created them. **Made men clean.** By his bloody death. Compare *2 Cor. 5:14-21*; *1 Pet. 2:24*; *1 Cor. 15:3*; *Gal. 2:20*. **He sat down in heaven.** See *Eph. 1:20-21*. **The right side** is the place of special honor. Jesus sitting down at God's right side is mentioned five times in this Letter, because it *presupposes* the raising of Christ from death, and is a clear proof that Jesus is the divine Son of God!

4. **Was made greater.** The Jews were very proud of the Law of Moses, because it has been given through angels (*Deut. 33:2*; *Acts 7:53*; *Gal. 3:19*; *Heb. 2:2*). Some said Jesus was himself an angel and had no real human nature (compare *1 John 4:2-3*). **That God gave him.** The name *Son* was not his until God gave it to him by the Incarnation (*Heb. 10:5*; *John 1:14*). This is *inheritance* in the sense of his *Messianic Sonship*. The Old Testament is a witness of the fact of his *Sonship*.

than theirs. <sup>5</sup>For God never said to any of his angels,

“You are my Son;  
today I have become your Father.”

Nor did God say to any angel,

“I will be his Father,  
and he shall be my Son.”

<sup>6</sup>When God was about to send his firstborn Son into the world he also said,

“All of God’s angels must worship him.”

<sup>7</sup>This is what God said about the angels,

“God makes his angels winds,  
and his servants flames of fire.”

<sup>8</sup>About the Son, however, God said:

“Your throne, O God, will last forever  
and ever!

You rule over your kingdom with  
justice.

<sup>9</sup>You love the right and hate the wrong;  
that is why God, your God, chose you  
and gave you the joy of an honor far  
greater  
than he gave to your companions.”

For to which of the angels <sup>5</sup>  
did God ever say,

“You are my Son; Today  
I have become your  
Father”?

Or again,

“I will be his Father, and  
he will be my Son”?

And again, when God brings <sup>6</sup>  
his firstborn into the world,  
he says,

“Let all God’s angels wor-  
ship him.”

In speaking of the angels he <sup>7</sup>  
says,

“He makes his angels  
winds, his servants  
flames of fire.”

But about the Son he says, <sup>8</sup>

“Your throne, O God, will  
last for ever and ever,  
and righteousness will be  
the scepter of your king-  
dom.

You have loved righteous-  
ness and hated wicked-  
ness; therefore God,  
your God, has set you  
above your companions  
by anointing you with the  
oil of joy.” <sup>9</sup>

5. Never said to. “God does not use this language to angels, but He does say this to the Son!” [God became the FATHER of Christ in the miraculous act of generation which took place prior to the Virgin Birth. See *Luke 1:35*.] The first quotation is from *Psalms 2:7*; the second is from *2 Sam. 7:14*. His Sonship is proved by his raising from death! See *Rom. 1:4*; *Acts 13:32-33*. In fact, the birth of Christ would be no more “greater than the angels” than the creation of Adam, were it not for the Resurrection! The whole FACT of the Messiahship stands or falls with the Resurrection (as Paul shows in *1 Cor. 15:12-20*). [See also notes on *1 John 5:6*.]

6. When God was about to send. Chrysostom, Calvin, Bengel, Bruce, et. al., think this refers to the time when Jesus was born at Bethlehem. *MacKnight* thinks this refers to the Second Coming. Whatever time, it shows that Christ is superior to the angels, since they must worship him! A footnote on the NIV says this quotation is found: “*Deut. 32:43* (Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls); *Psalms 97:7*.”

7. About the angels. The quotation is from *Psalms 104:4* Septuagint. The *Expositor’s Greek Testament* says: “The writer accepts the LXX translation and it serves his purpose of exhibiting that the characteristic function of angels is service, and that their form and appearance depend upon the will of God.”

8. About the Son, however. The quotation is from *Psalms 45:6-7*. Remember that one of the gifts from the Spirit which every apostle had, was inspired understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. Your throne, O God. The angels are servants; the Son has an eternal throne!!! Notice the Son is here called God. Compare what Jesus said in *John 8:24*. You rule. The whole point is that the Son is a Divine King with an eternal throne. See *1 Cor. 15:25-28* and notes.

9. You love the right. His choosing is said here to be the result of his good qualities which equip him to rule as God’s representative. The whole quotation should be taken as a general statement of Christ being supreme over all!!!

<sup>10</sup>He also said,

“You, Lord, in the beginning created the earth,  
and with your own hands you made the heavens.

<sup>11</sup>They will all disappear, but you will remain;  
they will all grow old like clothes.

<sup>12</sup>You will fold them up like a coat,  
and they will be changed like clothes.  
But you are always the same,  
and you will never grow old.”

<sup>13</sup>God never did say to any of his angels:

“Sit here at my right side,  
until I put your enemies  
as a footstool under your feet.”

<sup>14</sup>What are the angels, then? They are all spirits who serve God and are sent by him to help those who are to receive salvation.

### The Great Salvation

**2** That is why we must hold on all the more firmly to the truths we have heard, so that we

He also says,

“In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you 11 remain; they will all wear out like a garment.

You will roll them up 12 like a robe; like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”

To which of the angels did 13 God ever say,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool!”?

Are not all angels minister- 14 ing spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

#### Warning to Pay Attention

**2** We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

10. **He also said.** This is from *Psalms 102:25-27*. **Created the earth.** See *verse 2* and notes. This is to prove that angels had nothing to do with Creation. It also proves that the evil god (Satan) had nothing to do with Creation. See notes on *1 Tim. 4:4*.

11. **But you will remain.** “Although the material creation seems so SOLID yet it will disappear, but You will still be there!!!”

12. **You will fold them up.** Earth and sky will be folded like a coat. See *2 Pet. 3:10-13*. **But you are always the same.** The Son is eternal. He was always with the Father, He will always be with the Father. The Son (as the Logos) is UNCREATE! Not so the angels, who are a type of Creation.

13. **God never did say.** None of the angels are given authority to rule the earth. Angels are servants (*verse 4*). **Sit here at my right side.** This is quoted from *Psalms 110:1*. What God never did say to any of his angels, He did say to the Son. **The right side** is the place of honor. **Until I put.** See *Acts 2:35; 1 Cor. 15:25-28* and notes.

14. **What are angels, then?** “Rather than ruling as kings over this Universe, angels are spirits who serve God, and are sent to help those who are to receive eternal life.” Note the contrast: Christ rules; angels serve. *MacKnight* says: “The apostle does not say *minister to*, but *for them*, etc. The angels are ministers [servants] who belong to Christ, not to men, though employed by him for the benefit of men. Therefore this passage affords no ground for believing that every heir of salvation has a guardian angel assigned to him. Of the ministry of angels for the benefit of the heirs of salvation, we have many examples, both in the Old and in the New Testament.”

1. **That is why.** Because God speaks to us through his Son. **We must hold on.** “We must seize the Truth spoken through the Son, and firmly hold on to it!” **So that.** The symbolism is a *swiftly flowing flood*. In our *boat*, we must make some effort to row against the flood to keep from being swept away by it.

will not be carried away. <sup>2</sup>The message given by the angels was shown to be true, and anyone who did not follow it or obey it received the punishment he deserved. <sup>3</sup>How, then, shall we escape if we pay no attention to such a great salvation? The Lord himself first announced this salvation, and those who heard him proved to us that it is true. <sup>4</sup>At the same time God added his witness to theirs by doing signs of power, wonders, and many kinds of miracles. He also distributed the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will.

### The Leader to Salvation

<sup>5</sup>God did not place the angels as rulers over the world he was about to create—the world of which we speak. <sup>6</sup>Instead, as it is said somewhere in the Scriptures:

“God, what is man, that you should think  
of him;  
mere man, that you should care for  
him?”

For if the message spoken by 2  
angels was binding, and  
every violation and disobedience  
received its just punishment,  
how shall we escape if 3  
we ignore such a great salvation?  
This salvation, which  
was first announced by the  
Lord, was confirmed to us by  
those who heard him. God 4  
also testified to it by signs,  
wonders and various miracles,  
and gifts of the Holy Spirit  
distributed according to his will.

### Jesus Made Like His Brothers

It is not to angels that he 5  
has subjected the world to  
come, about which we are  
speaking. But there is a 6  
place where someone has  
testified:

“What is man that you  
are concerned about  
him, or the son of man  
that you should care for  
him?”

2. **The message given by angels.** This is the Law of Moses. See note on *Heb. 1:4*. Those who did things which the Law prohibited, or who failed to do all that the Law commanded, were severely punished!

3. **How, then, shall we escape?** “Christ is greater than the angels; and this means the Good News is greater than the Law. If those who did not pay attention to the Law were punished severely, how can we expect to escape if we pay no attention to the message and salvation given through the Son?” **The Lord himself.** The Good News is the message spoken by Christ (see *John 14:26*). See also *Luke 9:31* and notes. **And those who heard him.** Eyewitnesses (especially the apostles) verified the message of the Good News as they spread this throughout the world. (*Col. 1:23*). **Us** = Christians in general. See *1 John 1:1-4*.

4. **God added his witness.** The Law of Moses was authenticated by miracles (*Heb. 12:18-21*). The gospel was equally authenticated by the miracles which went side by side with the preaching of Christ and his apostles. Compare *Rom. 15:18-19*.

5. **God did not.** The TEV is clearer here. Christ created the earth (see *Heb. 1:10*), and he did not create it for angels, but for mankind, as the next verse shows. Remember: Christ in his incarnation is the *representative man*, the Second Adam. [Johnson sees in this the difference between the Jewish Age (which they called *the present world*) and the Christian Age (which the Jews called *the world to come*). See also *Matt. 19:28* and note.]

6. **Instead.** This is from *Psalms 8:4-6* Septuagint. **What is man?** *MacKnight* says this is Adam, who represents all mankind. **Mere man** = the son of man = all the descendants of that first man (so *MacKnight* says). On “Son of Man” as a messianic title, see notes on *Luke 22:69-70*. God’s *valuation* of the worth of mankind is shown in *Christ on the Cross!!!*

<sup>7</sup>You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you crowned him with glory and honor,  
<sup>8</sup>and made him ruler over all things."

It says that God made man "ruler over all things"; this clearly includes everything. But we do not see a man ruling over all things now. <sup>9</sup>But we do see Jesus! For a little while he was made lower than the angels, so that through God's grace he should die for all men. We see him crowned with glory and honor now because of the death he suffered. <sup>10</sup>It was only right that God, who creates and preserves all things, should make Jesus perfect through suffering, in order to bring many sons to share his glory. For Jesus is the one who leads them to salvation.

<sup>11</sup>He makes men pure from their sins, and both he and those who are made pure all have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to

You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet."

In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the Pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to

7. **For a little while.** Mankind, in this world which is under the curse, is for a little while lower than the angels. Christ, in taking our human nature (*Rom. 8:3; Heb. 10:5; 2:14*), became, like us, a little lower than the angels. But in his Resurrection, he became higher than the angels (*verse 9; Phil. 2:6-11*). **Lower than the angels.** This is the way it reads in the Septuagint. The Hebrew says: "lower than God (Elohim)." **You crowned him.** This speaks of mankind, as the next verse shows. Compare *Gen. 1:28*.

8. **Ruler over all things.** This is the point of the quotation. All things (except God, *1 Cor. 15:27*) were placed under man's rule in *Gen. 1:28*. But we do not see our human race in control over all things now. Compare *Gen. 3:16-19*. In the Incarnation (*John 1:14*), Christ took our human limitations.

9. **But we do see Jesus!** The TEV correctly makes this the climax of the apostle's reasoning. The hope of mankind is not angels, but Jesus!!! He is the Second Adam who brings us life!!! See *Rom. 5:14-18*. **For a little while.** Jesus had to share our humanity to die for all men. Compare *1 Cor. 15:22-23; Matt. 25:31-33*. Every man and woman has the right to be put right with God through Christ (*Rev. 22:17; John 6:45*). **We see him crowned.** "We do not see man in control, but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor by his raising from death and his going up to heaven to sit at God's right side. His death is not a thing of disgrace, but rather the means of our being made the friends of God (*Col. 1:18-20; 1 Cor. 1:23-24* and notes)."

10. **It was only right.** "You should not be surprised that God would save man by means of the death of Christ." **Should make Jesus perfect.** Not perfectly holy, since he was already sinless. But perfectly prepared to be our Savior. The rest of this chapter explains this. **For Jesus is the one.** "In the guided tour of life, Jesus is the one who leads us to our destination, which is salvation and life eternal! Jesus is the Pioneer because he opened a new way through his body of flesh (*Heb. 10:20*)."

11. **He makes men pure.** He makes men pure when they reach out through faith to seize his sacrifice and make themselves part of it. He continually is making men pure, on the basis of the one sacrifice which he made on the Cross. **All have the same Father.** Christians are twice-born (*John 3:5* and note). *Our New Birth* makes us part of God's Family (*Rom. 8:15-17*). **That is why.** "Christ does not act like a 'doctor among lepers,' but he calls men his brothers!!! Because of the Incarnation, He is one of us!!!"

call them his brothers. <sup>12</sup>As he says,  
 "God, I will speak about you to my  
 brothers;  
 I will praise you before the whole  
 gathering."

<sup>13</sup>He also says, "I will put my trust in God." And  
 he also says, "Here I am with the children that  
 God has given me."

<sup>14</sup>Since the children, as he calls them, are  
 people of flesh and blood, Jesus himself became  
 like them and shared their human nature. He did  
 so that through his death he might destroy the  
 Devil, who has the power over death, <sup>15</sup>and so set  
 free those who were slaves all their lives because  
 of their fear of death. <sup>16</sup>For it is clear that it is  
 not the angels that he helps. Instead, as the  
 scripture says, "He helps the descendants of  
 Abraham." <sup>17</sup>This means that he had to become  
 like his brothers in every way, in order to be their  
 faithful and merciful high priest in his service to  
 God, so that the people's sins would be forgiven.

call them brothers. He says, <sup>12</sup>

"I will declare your name  
 to my brothers; in the  
 presence of the congrega-  
 tion I will sing your  
 praises."

And again, <sup>13</sup>

"I will put my trust in  
 him."

And again he says,

"Here am I, and the chil-  
 dren God has given me."

Since the children have <sup>14</sup>  
 flesh and blood, he too  
 shared in their humanity so  
 that by his death he might  
 destroy him who holds the  
 power of death—that is, the  
 devil—and free those who all <sup>15</sup>  
 their lives were held in  
 slavery by their fear of  
 death. For surely it is not <sup>16</sup>  
 angels he helps, but Abra-  
 ham's descendants. For this <sup>17</sup>  
 reason he had to be made  
 like his brothers in every  
 way, in order that he might  
 become a merciful and faith-  
 ful high priest in service to  
 God, and that he might  
 make atonement for the sins

12. **As he says.** This is from *Psalms 22:22* Septuagint. **I will praise you.** HUMNEO: to praise; to sing; to keep talking about. See note on *Eph. 5:19*. The point is that Jesus is not ashamed to share *humanity* or *humanness*, and call men (including women) his brothers!

13. **He also says.** This quotes *Isa. 8:17*. He shows his *brotherhood* with *man* as he speaks his trust in God. **And he also says.** This quotes *Isa. 8:18*. This shows both that He was to come in human form, and that He makes himself the brother of the *saved*.

14. **Jesus himself.** As mankind are all people of flesh and blood, Jesus the Logos shared the human nature that we all have in common. **He did so.** He took flesh and blood, to destroy the Devil by means of his own death on the Cross. **Destroy the devil** by canceling his power. He did this through his *raising from death*. See *John 10:17-18*.

15. **And so set free.** In sharing death, the final horror which all must face, Christ completely shared the human experience. By raising from death he added a *new dimension* of hope. Not only does he make it possible for us to be forgiven our sin and be changed from the enemies of God into the friends of God, but he also is the **GUARANTEE** that we shall survive death!!! See *1 Cor. 15:20*.

16. **It is not the angels.** MacKnight understands this: "Moreover, by no means doth he take hold of the angels who sinned, to save them; but of those who are the seed of Abraham by faith he taketh hold, to deliver them from death, and to conduct them to heaven." **The scripture says.** "He helps the descendants of Abraham" is a quotation from *Isa. 41:8-9* Septuagint.

17. **This means.** He had to share completely our human nature and experience. See *Heb. 4:15; Rom. 8:3*. **Would be forgiven.** See *verse 14*. As High Priest, he offered the sacrifice of his own death so that the people's sins would be forgiven.



<sup>18</sup>And now he can help those who are tempted, because he himself was tempted and suffered.

### Jesus Greater than Moses

**3** My Christian brothers, who also have been called by God! Think of Jesus, whom God sent to be the High Priest of the faith we profess. <sup>2</sup>He was faithful to God, who chose him to do this work, just as Moses was faithful in his work in God's whole house. <sup>3</sup>A man who builds a house receives more honor than the house itself. In the same way, Jesus is worthy of much more glory than Moses. <sup>4</sup>Every house, of course, is built by someone—and God is the one who has built all things. <sup>5</sup>Moses was faithful in God's whole house as a servant, and spoke of the things that God

of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

### Jesus Greater Than Moses

**3** Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be

18. **Because.** Because he has experienced all these things himself, he is able to help those who are tempted. Compare *Matt. 4:1-11* and notes. Note that temptation itself is not sin, but it can lead into sin.

1. **My Christian brothers.** The usual New Testament meaning of this is "fellow Christians," including both men and women. **Who also.** God calls us through the message of the Good News (*John 6:44-45*). The Jews were called to a promised land here on earth; Christians are called by God to Eternity! **Think of Jesus.** "Think what these great truths about Jesus mean. He is the Son, and the High Priest. Let your minds penetrate deeply into the significance of these facts." **Whom God sent.** *Apostle* means: one who is sent on an important mission. In this sense, Moses was sent by God. But Christ was sent *from heaven* by God!!! *1 John 4:14*. **To be the High Priest.** Jesus both brought the message from God and is also High Priest. **The faith we profess.** "Our belief in Christ (compare *Matt. 16:16*), which sets us apart from non-Christian Jews."

2. **He was faithful.** He completed the mission which God sent him to do. See *John 17:4*. **Just as Moses.** This is the language of *Num. 12:7*. *MacKnight* says the point is: "As Moses was faithful in forming all parts of the Jewish church (God's house at that time); just so Christ was faithful in forming the *gospel church* to SUPERSEDE the Jewish church."

3. **A man who builds a house.** Even though Jesus is similar to Moses in being faithful, still he receives more honor and glory than Moses. The next verses explain this. [Note that God's house is built out of living stones (*Eph. 2:20-22; Matt. 16:18*).]

4. **Every house.** *MacKnight* words this: "Besides, every religious society is formed by someone; But he who hath formed all righteous communities and religious societies, is God; Who having delegated his authority to his Son, hath made him Lord of all."

5. **As a servant.** Here is the real difference between Moses and Christ! Moses was a servant in the Jewish church. He accurately carried out the mission which God gave him; because the Jewish church was a prophecy of what God would say in the future; that is, in Christ's church.

would say in the future. **“But Christ is faithful as the Son in charge of God’s house. We are his house, if we keep our courage and our confidence in what we hope for.**

### A Rest for God’s People

<sup>7</sup>So then, as the Holy Spirit says,

“If you hear God’s voice today,

<sup>8</sup>Do not be stubborn as you were when you rebelled against God, as you were that day in the desert when you put him to the test.

<sup>9</sup>There your ancestors put me to the test and tried me, says God, even though they saw what I did for forty years.

<sup>10</sup>For that reason I was angry with those people and said,

“They are always disloyal, and refuse to obey my commands.”

<sup>11</sup>I was angry and made a solemn promise: “They shall never come in and rest with me!”

said in the future. But **6** Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

### Warning Against Unbelief

So, as the Holy Spirit says: **7**

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your **8** hearts

as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested **9** and tried me, and for forty years saw what I did.

That is why I was angry **10** with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’

So I declared on oath in **11** my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

**6. As the Son.** God’s *house* is the *church* = the religious *community* of God’s people. Moses was a servant, Christ is the Son. When Christ *superseded* the Jewish church constructed by Moses, and built his new *gospel church* (messianic community) which would *include* all nations, he used his authority which belonged to him as the Son. **We are his house.** See *Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:5.* **If we keep.** Again the human element is stressed! Even though Jesus *paid it all*, God requires us to live a new life. See *Matt. 7:21-23;* and notes on *law* at the end of *Rom. 3:31.* It would be possible to forfeit our salvation (*Heb. 6:4-6*).

**7. So then.** “Be warned by the example of Israel!” **As the Holy Spirit says.** The Spirit speaks to us through the written Word. This quotation is from *Psalms 95:7-11* Septuagint. **If you hear.** (1) The fact that the Jewish church has been superseded does not terminate God’s offer of salvation. (2) The two great turning-points in *salvation* are: the giving of the Old Covenant; the giving of the New Covenant. Don’t make the same mistake which Israel did when the Old Covenant was given!

**8. Do not be stubborn.** Compare *Exod. 16:3; 17:1-7.* “After seeing the *hand of God* in Egypt, they still were stubborn and rebelled against God. Don’t you make that same mistake!”

**9. There your ancestors.** They annoyed God by their rebellion. Even though he gave them food and water by supernatural means, they still would not love Him.

**10. For that reason.** God was angry and disgusted with the very people He had saved! Their attitude (heart) was bad.

**11. I was angry.** In scripture, human body-parts and human emotions are used as figures-of-speech to communicate to us His way of doing things, in a form which we can understand. **GOD IS SPIRIT! They shall never!** The whole generation (except Joshua and Caleb) was refused entrance into Canaan! To get an idea of how many people this represented, see *Num. 1:1-3, 46.* There were 603,550 men over age twenty, who could fight in an army.

<sup>12</sup>My brothers, be careful that no one among you has a heart so bad and unbelieving that he will turn away from the living God. <sup>13</sup>Instead, in order that none of you be deceived by sin and become stubborn, you must help one another every day, as long as the "Today" in the scripture applies to us. <sup>14</sup>For we are all partners with Christ, if we hold on firmly to the end the confidence we had at the beginning.

<sup>15</sup>This is what the scripture says:

"If you hear God's voice today,  
do not be stubborn as you were  
when you rebelled against God."

<sup>16</sup>Who heard God's voice and rebelled against him? All the people who were led out of Egypt by Moses. <sup>17</sup>With whom was God angry for forty years? With the people who sinned, who fell down dead in the desert. <sup>18</sup>When God made his solemn promise, "They shall never come in and rest with me"—of whom was he speaking? Of those who rebelled. <sup>19</sup>We see, then, that they were not able to go in because they did not believe.

See to it, brothers, that 12  
none of you has a sinful, un-  
believing heart that turns  
away from the living God. 13  
But encourage one another  
daily, as long as it is called  
Today, so that none of you  
may be hardened by sin's  
deceitfulness. We have come 14  
to share in Christ if we hold  
firmly till the end the confi-  
dence we had at first. As has 15  
just been said:

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

Who were they who heard 16  
and rebelled? Were they  
not all those Moses led out  
of Egypt? And with whom 17  
was he angry for forty years?  
Was it not with those who  
sinned, whose bodies fell in  
the desert? And to whom did 18  
God swear that they would  
never enter his rest if not to  
those who disobeyed? So we 19  
see that they were not able to  
enter, because of their  
unbelief.

12. **Be careful.** "This example of sin and punishment should teach you a lesson. You will be sinning just as they did if you reject the gospel, or if having once accepted it, then renounce it."

13. **Instead.** "Instead of trying to turn each other away from Christ, you must help one another to believe!" **Today.** While it is "Today," God's offer of salvation is in effect. But it also implies that it may be withdrawn at any time. Sin makes a man *blind* to the attractiveness of God's *offer!* (Remember this is written to Christians. See *verse 14.*)

14. **Partners with Christ.** Compare notes on *verse 6 At the beginning.* See *Heb. 6:4-6; 11:1; Rom. 5:1-2.*

15. **This is what.** *Psalms 95:7-8* Septuagint. See notes on *verse 7.*

16. **Who heard?** The answer is: *all the people.* But see notes on next *verse.*

17. **With whom.** Note that these people continued to rebel against God during the whole forty year's time. **Who fell down dead.** The whole generation who escaped from Egypt in the Exodus, died in the desert! [But there were a few exceptions: Joshua and Caleb are mentioned by name in *Deut. 1; Num. 34:17* and *Joshua 24:33* show Eleazar and perhaps some or even all of the Levites were allowed in.]

18. **When God made his solemn promise.** *Num. 14:22-23; Psalm 95:11.* "To show you the sin of rebellion, I ask you to whom did God make this solemn promise: 'They shall never come in and rest with me'? It was those who had seen his miracles, but because they did not believe, they refused to go into the land of Canaan."

19. **They were not able to go in.** If *unbelief* made it impossible for the Israelites to go into the land of Canaan, then *unbelief* will close the gates of heaven to those who have already started on their way! They did not believe God could bring them into the promised land in spite of the fierce opposition they would face; and so they would not attempt to conquer it when God told them to go forward. These Hebrew Christians were in danger of *dropping out* of the battle, and so losing all they had won!

**4** Now, God has left us the promise that we may go in and rest with him. Let us fear, then, so that none of you will be found to have failed to go in to that rest. <sup>2</sup>For we have heard the Good News, just as they did. They heard the message but it did them no good, because when they heard it they did not receive it with faith. <sup>3</sup>We who believe, then, do go in and rest with God. It is just as he said,

"I was angry and made a solemn promise:  
"They shall never come in and rest with me!"

he said this even though his work was finished from the time he created the world. <sup>4</sup>For somewhere in the Scriptures this is said about the seventh day, "God rested on the seventh day from all his works." <sup>5</sup>This same matter is spoken of again: "They shall never come in and rest with

#### A Sabbath-rest for the People of God

**4** Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

"So I declared on oath in my anger,  
"They shall never enter my rest."

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "and on the seventh day God rested from all his work." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

1. **Let us fear, then.** "Since the Israelites were not allowed in because of their unbelief, we should fear that the same thing could happen to us, and be careful that we go all the way into the promised land!"

2. **Just as they did.** The Good News to them was the promise of Canaan. The Good News to us is Eternity! Compare *2 Pet. 3:13*. But it did them no good. Their failure to believe God, disqualified them! [On faith, see note on *James 2:19*.]

3. **We who believe, then.** "If their unbelief disqualified them, then we who believe *will be* qualified to go in and rest with God." As he said. See *Heb. 3:11* and note. Even though. God intended man to go in and rest with him. If they do not do this, it certainly is not because God left his work unfinished! The sabbath is symbolic of this Eternal Rest, yet keeping the sabbath is not the same as entering into that Rest.

4. **About the seventh day.** The Sabbath is Saturday (see *Matt. 28:1* and note). The quotation is from *Gen. 2:2*. The sabbath had special meaning for the Jews (*Deut. 5:15*). Yet the rest of the seventh-day-Sabbath was not the rest which Israel was denied, nor the rest which we who believe do go into. God rested = God completely rested, because his work was finished.

5. **This same matter.** Again he quotes *Psalms 95:11* Septuagint. "This shows that a rest different from the one in Canaan, was promised to Abraham's descendants. This rest would be forfeited by unbelief, but seized by believing!"

me." "Those who first heard the Good News did not go in and rest with God because they did not believe. There are, then, others who are allowed to go in and rest with God. <sup>7</sup>This is shown by the fact that God sets another day, which is called "Today." He spoke of it many years later by means of David, in the scripture already quoted,

"If you hear God's voice today,  
do not be stubborn."

<sup>8</sup>If Joshua had led the people into God's rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. <sup>9</sup>As it is, however, there still remains for God's people a rest like God's resting on the seventh day. <sup>10</sup>For whoever goes in and rests with God will rest from his own works, just as God rested from his. <sup>11</sup>Let us, then, do our best to go in and rest with God. We must not, any of us, disobey as they did and fail to go in.

<sup>12</sup>The word of God is alive and active. It is sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together.

It still remains that some <sup>6</sup> will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore <sup>7</sup> God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before:

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

For if Joshua had given <sup>8</sup> them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, <sup>9</sup> then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone <sup>10</sup> who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let <sup>11</sup> us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

The word of God is living <sup>12</sup> and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and

6. **Those who first heard.** God does not experiment or make mistakes. The very fact that he created a rest proves that some will go in and rest. Those who first heard the Good News of this rest did not go in. But those who do believe (like Joshua and Caleb), will be allowed to go in and rest.

7. **This is shown.** Long after Israel had gone into Canaan, God spoke to them through David. These words quote *Psalms 95:7-8* Septuagint. This shows that the words to the Israelites in the desert were not only for them, but was a command for mankind in all ages of time (when properly understood).

8. **If.** [Note that Joshua and Jesus are different forms of the same Hebrew name.] "If God's promise had been completely made to come true by Joshua leading the people into Canaan, there would be no reference to another day! Yet David speaks of another day!"

9. **There still remains.** "Since neither the Sabbath nor Canaan made God's promise come true, it still remains for God's people to receive this rest."

10. **Will rest from his own works.** In other words, God's people will not go in and rest until their time of testing and suffering is completed. Compare *Rev. 14:13*.

11. **Let us, then.** "Since there is the possibility of going in and resting with God, we should do our best to seize it! We should not disbelieve and disobey as the Israelites did, and be turned away and disqualified!"

12. **The word of God.** The Israelites were turned away when they refused to hear and believe. The message of the Good News calls us to go into God's Rest. This word is alive and active, because of its influence on us (compare *1 Pet. 1:22-23*). It is sharper. It cuts in all directions. *Phocylides* said: "Reason is a weapon that penetrates deeper into a man than a sword." To where soul and spirit meet.

It judges the desires and thoughts of men's hearts. <sup>13</sup>There is nothing that can be hid from God. Everything in all creation is exposed and lies open before his eyes; and it is to him that we must all give account of ourselves.

### Jesus the Great High Priest

<sup>14</sup>Let us, then, hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we have a great high priest who has gone into the very presence of God—Jesus, the Son of God. <sup>15</sup>Our high priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy with our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a high priest who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us be brave, then, and come forward to God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it.

marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all 13 creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

### Jesus the Great High Priest

Therefore, since we have 14 a great high priest who has gone into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high 15 priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then 16 approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We ordinarily say *soul* when we mean *spirit*. *PSUCHE* means: *soul, self, inner life, one's inmost being; (physical) life; that which has life, living creature, person, human being*. The writer of this Letter sees man as a *triune being*, as does Paul in *1 Thess. 5:23*. These three parts are: a *body* of flesh and blood; a *sentient soul* ["In whose hand is the soul of everything living, and the spirit of all human flesh." *Job 12:10* from Zamenhof's version of the Masoretic Hebrew]; a *rational spirit*. The meaning of this whole verse is: "The word of God coming to men in the message of the Good News, offering the highest kind of good, tests their real desires, motivations, and goals. This is an infallible test of whether a person truly loves and searches for the good; or repudiates it as his eternal inheritance."

13. **There is nothing.** *MacKnight* sees here a reference to the symbolism of the Jewish *burnt offering*, where the animal was skinned, ripped open, eviscerated, and its backbone split. This was symbolic that nothing was hidden in the one for whom the sacrifice was offered. Unfaithfulness, disloyalty, and hypocrisy, no matter how carefully hidden, cannot be concealed from our Judge!!!

14. **Hold firmly.** "The unbelieving Jews say the gospel has neither a High Priest nor any sacrifice for sin; and they urge you to turn away from Christ and go back to the Law. But hold firmly to the faith! We have a great High Priest who has gone into the very presence of God!!!" See also *Heb. 9:11-14*.

15. **Our high priest.** "Even though our High Priest is the Son of God, he can feel sympathy with our weakness." **Who was tempted.** Our technological age creates no new temptations, but only brings the old temptations closer to us. In his earthly experience, Jesus met and conquered everything that we will ever face! Compare *Heb. 2:17-18* and notes.

16. **Let us be brave.** "Because of the High Priest we have, we can be brave and come forward to God's throne (which Judaism does not make possible)!" **There we will receive.** Everything is ours in Christ!!! See *1 Cor. 3:21-23*. Judaism nor any other religion has anything to offer that we do not *already* have in Christ!!! Compare *James 1:5*.

**5** Every high priest is chosen from his fellowmen and appointed to serve God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup>Since he himself is weak in many ways, he is able to be gentle with those who are ignorant and make mistakes. <sup>3</sup>And because he is himself weak, he must offer sacrifices not only for the sins of the people but also for his own sins. <sup>4</sup>No one chooses for himself the honor of being a high priest. It is only by God's call that a man is made a high priest—just as Aaron was called.

<sup>5</sup>In the same way, Christ did not take upon himself the honor of being a high priest. Instead God said to him,

"You are my Son;  
today I have become your Father."

<sup>6</sup>He also said in another place,

"You will be a priest forever,  
in the priestly order of Melchizedek."

**5** Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

"You are my Son;  
today I have become  
your Father."

And he says in another place,

"You are a priest forever,  
just like Melchizedek."

1. **Every high priest.** "To prove that Jesus is a real High Priest, I will first describe a high priest of Judaism." **Chosen.** Such as Aaron and all the high priests of Israel. **On their behalf.** God does not need a high priest, but people do. **To offer.** As a lawyer stands between his client and the court, so the high priest stands between the people and their God. The gifts and sacrifices were offered either by the high priest in person, or by his direction.

2. **Since he himself is weak.** He has been chosen from among his fellowmen, so he understands them perfectly, because he himself shares their weakness. Compare *Gal. 6:1*.

3. **And because.** As a human being, the Jewish high priest had to offer sacrifices for his own personal sins first. See *Lev. 16:6*. Notice the symbolism in the high priest's vestments (*Exod. 28*).

4. **No one chooses for himself.** "To apply these things to Jesus, notice first that no high priest chooses himself. God chooses him, just as He chose Aaron." See *Exod. 28:1; Lev. 8:2-5*.

5. **Christ did not take upon himself.** "In the gospel church, no one appoints himself High Priest. God appointed Christ, just as he had appointed Aaron." **God said to him.** The quotation is *Psalms 2:7*. The time is when Jesus was raised from death. See note on *Heb. 1:5*.

6. **He also said.** "As God has called Christ to be High Priest, he also says that Christ will not be a priest like Aaron, but like Melchizedek." The quotation is from *Psalms 110:4*. **Melchizedek.** The priesthood of this man was *discrete* as he stood alone and isolated. He was not part of a series of high priests, as was Aaron. *Heb. 7:1-10* explains this in more detail.

<sup>7</sup>In his life on earth Jesus made his prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to God, who could save him from death. Because he was humble and devoted, God heard him. <sup>8</sup>But even though he was God's Son he learned to be obedient by means of his sufferings. <sup>9</sup>When he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him, <sup>10</sup>and God declared him to be high priest, in the priestly order of Melchizedek.

During the days of Jesus' <sup>7</sup> life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although <sup>8</sup> he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made <sup>9</sup> perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and <sup>10</sup> was designated by God to be high priest, just like Melchizedek.

### Warning against Falling Away

<sup>11</sup>There is much we have to say about this matter, but it is hard to explain to you, because you are so slow to understand. <sup>12</sup>There has been enough time for you to be teachers—yet you still need someone to teach you the first lessons of God's message. Instead of eating solid food, you

### Warning Against Falling Away

We have much to say <sup>11</sup> about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by <sup>12</sup> this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk,

7. **In his life on earth.** "As High Priest, Jesus can sympathize with our weakness, because since he took our human nature, he experienced the fear of death that we humans have. His human nature recoiled from the Cross, just as ours would." **Because.** This points to the time in the garden (*Matt. 26:36-46* and notes). Luke says an angel came and strengthened him. *MacKnight* understands this to mean: "delivered him from fear."

8. **But even though.** "He was not exempt from suffering, just because he was God's Son. He learned first-hand how difficult it is for men to obey God. He learned this by experience, and he also learned what kind of help men need to help them *stand in the whirlwind*."

9. **When he was made perfect.** He was already a perfect man, but he became a perfect High Priest! He became the source. *Christ on the cross* is where our salvation comes from! See *1 Cor. 1:23-25* and notes. **Who obey him.** He does not save the disobedient. Compare *Matt. 7:21-23; James 2:19*.

10. **And God declared him.** *MacKnight* thinks this refers to the time when Jesus went back to heaven and sat down at God's right side. See notes on *verse 6; 7:1-10*.

11. **There is much.** The *Expositor's Greek Testament* says: "No doubt the reference is not barely to Melchizedek, but to Melchizedek as type [model, pattern] of Christ's priesthood." The problem is not the hidden secrets of Melchizedek, if there are any, but the fact that his readers are *spiritually retarded!* More is said about Melchizedek in *chapter 7*.

12. **There has been enough time.** "Enough time has passed since you became Christians, that you should have matured to the extent you could teach others. Yet here you are, needing someone to teach you the ABC's of the Good News!" [They may have been Christians for twenty or thirty years at this time.] **You still have to drink milk.** "You are not capable of using the more complete knowledge of Christianity!" Compare *1 Cor. 3:1-4* and notes.



still have to drink milk. <sup>13</sup>Anyone who has to drink milk is still a child, without any experience in the matter of right and wrong. <sup>14</sup>Solid food, on the other hand, is for adults, who have trained and used their tastes to know the difference between good and evil.

**6** Let us go forward, then, to mature teaching and leave behind us the first lessons of the Christian message. We should not lay again the foundation of turning away from useless works and believing in God; <sup>2</sup>of the teaching about baptisms and the laying on of hands; of the raising of the dead and the eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup>Let us go forward! And this is what we will do, if God allows.

not solid food! Anyone who <sup>13</sup> lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food <sup>14</sup> is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

**6** Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity. Let us not lay again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, <sup>2</sup> the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God <sup>3</sup> permitting, we will do so.

13. **Is still a child.** "One who knows only the *letter* of the Old Testament is unskilled in the knowledge of the Good News." See *Rom. 10:6-8; Gal. 3:24*.

14. **Who have trained and used their tastes.** "The child must eat whatever is given to it; the boy is warned what to eat and what to avoid; as he grows, he learns by his experience, so that when he is grown, he does not need an instructor or a priest to tell him what is good and what is poisonous. This Letter shows the first evidence of maturity is the ability to teach; the second, knowing the difference between good and evil in things that are being taught. The one implies the other.

1. **Let us go forward.** "You lay the foundation for the purpose of building on it!" **To mature teaching.** "You do not progress away from God's act in Christ to set men free. You progress into it!" **And leave behind us.** "Let us leave behind the ABC's of the Good News and get into the deeper meanings of these things, and of the symbolism and prophecies of the Law." This is a *call* to advance to perfectness in Christ! This is our goal (*Eph. 4:13-15; Rom. 12:1-2*), even though we must still fight our weak human nature (*Rom. 7:14-25; Phil. 3:12-14*). The human element requires our cooperation! **We should not lay again.** "You have already laid the foundation. Now you must build on it!" **Turning away.** *Repent* means to *turn away* from useless works of sin that lead to death, and *turn* to God. **Believing in God.** See *Acts 16:31-33*.

2. **About baptisms.** The Law had many baptisms or immersions of the body in water. Jewish Christians would connect these with Christian baptism in their thinking (see notes on *Acts 19:3*). The basic idea in them is *purity*. Compare *Heb. 10:22*. **The laying on of hands.** *Johnson* sees in this the gifts from the Spirit by the apostles's hands (*Acts 8:17*). But Jewish Christians might also connect it with the ritual of laying hands on the sacrifice being offered in the Temple. **Of the raising.** One of the first lessons of the Good News. It formed an important part of preaching the message (*Acts 17:18*). **The eternal judgment.** This went along with the raising of the dead. Compare *Jude 14-15*.

3. **Let us go forward.** This is the *point* they must learn! **If God allows.** This does not imply any doubt that God will allow it, but rather being aware that success depends upon God's will (compare *1 Cor. 16:7*).

<sup>4</sup>For how can those who fall away be brought back to repent again? They were once in God's light. They tasted heaven's gift and received their share of the Holy Spirit. <sup>5</sup>They knew from experience that God's word is good, and they had felt the powers of the coming age. <sup>6</sup>And then they fell away! It is impossible to bring them back to repent again, because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross once more and exposing him to public shame.

<sup>7</sup>God blesses the ground that drinks in the rain that often falls on it, and that grows plants that are useful to those for whom it is cultivated. <sup>8</sup>But if it grows thorns and weeds it is worth nothing; it is in danger of being cursed by God, and will be destroyed by fire.

It is impossible for those 4  
who have once been enlight-  
ened, who have tasted the  
heavenly gift, who have  
shared in the Holy Spirit,  
who have tasted the good-  
ness of the word of God and  
the powers of the coming  
age, if they fall away, to be  
brought back to repentance,  
because to their loss they are  
crucifying the Son of God all  
over again and subjecting  
him to public disgrace.

Land that drinks in the 7  
rain often falling on it and  
that produces a crop useful  
to those who farm it receives  
the blessing of God. But 8  
land that produces thorns  
and thistles is worthless and  
is in danger of being cursed.  
In the end it will be burned.

4. **For how can.** "Here is what you face if you do not *go forward!* God's mercy does not fail, and we are sure of that! But there is a sin that cannot be forgiven, not because God would not forgive it, but because the one who does it does not believe he has sinned." (See notes on *Matt. 12:31-32*). **To repent again?** These are not *inactive members* (backsliders), but *apostates* who have repudiated Jesus. They have destroyed their moral ability to repent! **They were once.** These had been genuine Christians. They had seen God's light (*John 8:12*) and reached out through faith to seize it and make themselves part of it! **They tasted.** They had experienced in their own lives the effect of this *newness* in Christ. **And received their share.** Every Christian is a Spirit-filled Christian. Compare *Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20*. But it is possible to restrain the Spirit (*1 Thess. 5:19*). God does not save you against your will!

5. **From experience.** They had studied the teachings and promises of the Good News, and believed them! **Of the coming age.** Remember this was written to Jews. They called the age of the Messiah: *the coming age*. They would understand this to be speaking of the Christian age. Since the Holy Spirit was mentioned in *verse 4*, *MacKnight* thinks the *powers* are the ability of the Good News to convert people to Christ. Compare *Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Thess. 1:9* and notes.

6. **And then they fell away!** *Beza* in his Latin version made it read: "If they fall away," because he did not believe it possible for Chosen People to *fall away*. But a warning about something which could not happen would be meaningless! *Johnson* says the phrase means: "Apostatize from the faith." **To bring them back.** These people have now decided in their own minds that Jesus was an impostor, a phony, who deserved the death that he died. For this reason, they have renounced the gospel, and there is no way to reach them! **Because they are nailing.** By renouncing Christ, they place themselves with those who nailed Christ to the cross! **And exposing him.** "It is a fatal step to renounce Christ! Men who left the church of Christ (the messianic community) and went back to the synagogue, became companions of people who thought they were doing God honor by cursing the name of Jesus." This is an *eternal sin*. See note on *Matt. 12:32*. Note that this can result from *FAILING* to go forward!!!

7. **God blesses the ground.** "I will show you this example from nature which teaches the doom of those who do not go forward." **Plants that are useful.** If the ground produces good fruit, more time is spent on it. Compare *John 15:1-10*.

8. **Thorns and weeds.** If the ground will only grow thorns and weeds, it has no real value to the farmer. If your life produces only thorns and weeds, God cannot use you!

<sup>9</sup>But even if we speak like this, dear friends, we feel sure about you. We know that you have the better blessings that belong to your salvation. <sup>10</sup>God is not unfair. He will not forget the work you did, or the love you showed for him in the help you gave and still give your fellow Christians. <sup>11</sup>Our great desire is that each one of you keep up his eagerness to the end, so that the things you hope for will come true. <sup>12</sup>We do not want you to become lazy, but to be like those who believe and are patient, and so receive what God has promised.

**God's Sure Promise**

<sup>13</sup>When God made the promise to Abraham, he made a vow to do what he had promised. Since there was no one greater than himself, he used his own name when he made his vow. <sup>14</sup>He said, "I promise you that I will bless you and give you many descendants." <sup>15</sup>Abraham was patient, and so he received what God had promised.

Even though we speak like <sup>9</sup>  
 this, dear friends, we are  
 confident of better things in  
 your case—things that ac-  
 company salvation. God is <sup>10</sup>  
 not unjust; he will not forget  
 your work and the love you  
 have shown him as you have  
 helped his people and con-  
 tinue to help them. We want <sup>11</sup>  
 each of you to show this  
 same diligence to the very  
 end, in order to make your  
 hope sure. We do not want <sup>12</sup>  
 you to become lazy, but to  
 imitate those who through  
 faith and patience inherit  
 what has been promised.

**The Certainty of God's Promise**

When God made his <sup>13</sup>  
 promise to Abraham, since  
 there was no one greater for  
 him to swear by, he swore by  
 himself, saying, "I will surely <sup>14</sup>  
 bless you and give you many  
 descendants." And so after <sup>15</sup>  
 waiting patiently, Abraham  
 received what was promised.

- 9. **We feel sure about you.** "We speak, like this to warn you of the dangers, but this does not mean that we think you have failed." **We know.** We can see in your actions the *evidence* that you are following Christ."
- 10. **God is not unfair.** God will bless the ground that has already grown good plants. Their Christian activities and practical charities will not be forgotten. **In the help.** *MacKnight* thinks this points especially to helping the persecuted Christians in Judea.
- 11. **Our great desire.** "We want you to keep up the eagerness you have already demonstrated by your actions. This is why you must go forward! The prize comes at the end of the race!"
- 12. **We do not want.** There was a real danger that they would *become* lazy and allow themselves to drift away from the Truth. **But to be like those.** (1) Like the Christian Gentiles; (2) Like those mentioned in *chapter 11*. **And so receive.** God requires people to *trust and obey*. Those who receive the promise are those who believe and are patient.
- 13. **He made a vow.** "When I say to be like the Christian Gentiles, it is because they will receive what God has promised equally with the Jews. In fact, God's *sure promise* is illustrated by Abraham."
- 14. **He said.** *Gen. 22:17*. **I will bless you** by accepting your faith as righteousness (*Rom. 4:22*). **And give you many descendants** who will be your spiritual children and also be accepted as righteous through their faith. Compare *Gal. 3:26-29*.
- 15. **Abraham was patient.** *Patience* is obedient endurance. Even though things did not happen immediately (as Abraham might have expected), he was patient because he **EXPECTED** God to keep his promise. His actions showed that he did believe God!!! At the right time, God made his promise come true.

<sup>16</sup>When a man makes a vow he uses the name of someone greater than himself, and a vow settles all arguments between men. <sup>17</sup>God wanted to make it very clear to those who were to receive what he promised that he would never change his purpose; so he added his vow to the promise. <sup>18</sup>There are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie. So we who have found safety with him are greatly encouraged to hold firmly to the hope that is placed before us. <sup>19</sup>We have this hope as an anchor for our hearts. It is safe and sure, and goes through the curtain of the heavenly temple into the inner sanctuary. <sup>20</sup>Jesus has gone in there before us, on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek.

Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, just like Melchizedek.

### The Priest Melchizedek

**7** This Melchizedek was king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God. As Abraham

#### Melchizedek the Priest

**7** This Melchizedek was king of Salem and a priest of God Most High. He

16. **When a man makes a vow.** A *vow* is a promise made while calling on (invoking) a person, place, or thing as *witness* (attestant) to the fact that you will fulfill your promise or commitment. This is also called *swearing an oath* (compare *Matt. 5:33-37; 23:16-22; James 5:12*). **Settles all arguments.** The vow is accepted as a *guarantee*.

17. **God wanted.** "To show us in a way we could understand, God added his vow to the promise. This means he would never change his *purpose* in which he promises to accept men as righteous because of their faith, and to give them the heavenly country.

18. **These two things.** God's promise and his vow. Neither of these could ever be broken. **Are greatly encouraged.** "We have escaped from the guilt and fear of punishment which makes the Law a curse. We have found safety with Him as we hold firmly to the hope of forgiveness which God promised us and confirmed by His vow."

19. **Hope as an anchor.** "As the storms howl around the ship, the anchor holds firm in the unseen world below the surface. Just so, hope reaches through the curtain into the inner sanctuary (the *true* Most Holy Place) and takes hold in the presence of God himself! Our Christian hope is anchored in Eternity!"

20. **Jesus has gone in.** As the Jewish high priest went through the curtain into the Most Holy Place in the earthly temple, Jesus has gone into heaven itself and sits at God's right side! By doing this, he has anchored our hope of forgiveness and eternal life, and we hold firmly to it! See *Heb. 10:20*. **He has become.** Unlike the Jewish high priest, Jesus is a high priest forever!! This is explained in the next chapter.

1. **This Melchizedek.** This picks up the explanation where it stopped in *Heb. 5:11*. Melchizedek is a *mystery-man*, but part of the problem is failing to understand the *Hebrew idiom* and reading too much into the words. Remember that the Jews were extremely accurate and meticulous in examining the qualifications of one who would be the high priest. Now they are being asked to accept Jesus as High

was coming back from the battle in which he killed the kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him. <sup>2</sup>Abraham gave him one tenth of all he had taken. (The first meaning of Melchizedek's name is "King of Righteousness." And because he was king of Salem, his name also means "King of Peace.") <sup>3</sup>There is no record of Melchizedek's father or mother, or of any of his ancestors; no record of his birth or of his death. He is like the Son of God; he remains a priest forever.

<sup>4</sup>You see, then, how great he was. Abraham, the patriarch, gave him one tenth of all he got in the battle. <sup>5</sup>And those descendants of Levi who are priests are commanded by the Law to collect one tenth from the people of Israel—that is, they collect it from their own countrymen, even though they too are descendants of Abra-

met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem," means "king of peace." Without father or mother, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. 2

Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abra- 3 4 5

Priest. But, he comes from the wrong Tribe! He could not be a Jewish high priest. But, the scripture speaks of another priestly order, which formed no part of the Jewish priesthood. Jesus is a high priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek. **King of Salem.** Time has proved Josephus correct in saying Salem is Jerusalem. In the Armana tablets, *Urusalim* is the ancient name of this city. Melchizedek was greater than Aaron, because he was king as well as high priest. **And a priest.** The Jews accepted the fact that Melchizedek was a true priest of the Most High God, even though he was not part of the Aaronic priesthood. **As Abraham.** See *Gen. 14:18-20*. Note that Melchizedek blessed Abraham. This fact has special meaning to a Jew.

2. **Abraham gave him.** This fact shows that Abraham accepted Melchizedek as being genuine, the true Priest of the Most High God. **King of Righteousness.** In ancient time, names had special meaning. *Abram's* name was changed to *Abraham* to show that he would be the FATHER of many nations. Melchizedek means King of Righteousness = *one who especially loves righteousness*. King of Salem = King of Peace = *one who especially loves peace*.

3. **There is no record.** The TEV accurately translates the *Hebrew idiom*. A *first century* reader understood it as it is worded in the TEV. The meaning is that Melchizedek's priesthood does not derive from these things which were so important to the Aaronic priesthood. To be a Jewish high priest, there had to be a precise record of mother and father, of ancestors, of birth, and this priesthood was limited to a certain definite period of time. Melchizedek stands *discrete* on the pages of history, appearing only for a brief instant! **He is like the Son of God.** Not *equal*, but *like!* The way in which he is like the Son of God has to do with the fact of his priesthood. It does not terminate! Aaron's priesthood terminated at his death, and his son replaced him as high priest. But Melchizedek's priesthood never came to an end, and even though he is no longer on the earth, he is still a priest of the Most High God. But the real point here is that Jesus is *that kind* of a High Priest.

4. **How great he was.** "I show you how great Melchizedek was, because the patriarch Abraham gave him one tenth (a tithe) of all he got in the battle. By doing this, Abraham showed that he believed Melchizedek greater than himself.

5. **And those descendants of Levi.** All the Jewish priests were descendants of Levi. The high priests were descendants of Aaron (who belonged to the Tribe of Levi). The Law commands them to collect one tenth (a tithe) from their fellow countrymen (the other Tribes). **Even though.** Since they are all descended from Abraham, none is greater than the other.

ham. <sup>6</sup>Melchizedek was not descended from Levi, but he collected one tenth from Abraham and blessed him who received God's promises. <sup>7</sup>There is no doubt that the one who blesses is greater than the one who is blessed. <sup>8</sup>In the case of the priests, the tenth is collected by men who die; but as for Melchizedek, the tenth was collected by one who lives, as the scripture says. <sup>9</sup>And, so to speak, when Abraham paid the tenth, Levi (whose descendants collect the tenth) also paid it. <sup>10</sup>For Levi had not yet been born, but was, so to speak, in the body of his ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met him.

<sup>11</sup>It was on the basis of the Levitical priesthood that the Law was given to the people of Israel. Now, if the work of the Levitical priests had been perfect, there would have been no need for a different kind of priest to appear, one who is in the priestly order of Melchizedek, not in

ham. This man, however, 6  
did not trace his descent 7  
from Levi, yet he collected a 8  
tenth from Abraham and 9  
blessed him who had the 10  
promises. And without 11  
doubt the lesser person is 12  
blessed by the greater. In the 13  
one case, the tenth is col- 14  
lected by men who die; but 15  
in the other case, by him 16  
who is declared to be living. 17  
One might even say that 18  
Levi, who collects the tenth, 19  
paid the tenth through Abra- 20  
ham, because when Mel- 21  
chizedek met Abraham, Levi 22  
was still in the body of his 23  
ancestor.

#### Jesus like Melchizedek

If perfection could have 11  
been attained through the 12  
Levitical priesthood (for on 13  
the basis of it the law was 14  
given to the people), why was 15  
there still need for another 16  
priest to come—one like 17  
Melchizedek, not like Aar- 18

6. **Was not descended from.** Melchizedek was not a relative of either Levi or Abraham. In other words, the Law did not apply to what he did in receiving the tenth. **But he collected.** The fact that he could do this, separate and apart from the Law, proved him greater than Abraham. **And blessed him.** Abraham was the one who received God's promises!!! For Melchizedek to bless him, also proves his greatness, as *verse 7* shows.

7. **There is no doubt.** "This proves that Melchizedek is higher in rank and closer to God, than Abraham." [Man blesses God in the sense of praising Him, or wishing that all praise may be His.]

8. **By men who die.** "The priesthood of all Jewish priests terminates at a point in time, and the death of the high priest is a matter of record, because accurate accounts are kept of it." **By one who lives.** The fact that the scripture says nothing of Melchizedek's death is made to be a proof. We see him in the scripture *only* as a living priest (in contrast to the Jewish priests), and in this sense he is a *type* (symbolic picture) of Jesus the Son of God. Compare *Psalms 110:4*.

9. **And, so to speak.** "In fact, even Levi himself paid the tenth to Melchizedek, so to speak. This is further proof that Melchizedek is a greater priest than any priest of the Levitical priesthood." [The Jewish priesthood = the Aaronic priesthood = the Levitical priesthood.]

10. **Had not yet been born.** "All the Nation of Israel, including kings and priests, were represented in Abraham even though they were not yet born. So the **FACT** that Abraham paid the tenth to Melchizedek is *imputed* to Levi and all his descendants as well."

11. **It was on the basis.** The Law was given so that the people could worship God under the Levitical priesthood. The priesthood made it possible for the Law to function. No wonder, then, that many Jews would look no farther than the Law and think that *it* was God's *perfect* salvation. **Now.** "If the Levitical priesthood and the Law had been perfect, it would have continued on forever. But the prediction of a different kind of priest is evidence of God's *intent* to change both the priesthood and the Law."

Aaron's order. <sup>12</sup>For when the priesthood is changed, there also has to be a change of the law. <sup>13</sup>And our Lord, of whom these things are said, belonged to a different tribe; and no member of his tribe ever served as a priest at the altar. <sup>14</sup>It is well known that he was born a member of the tribe of Judah; and Moses did not mention this tribe when he spoke of priests.

### Another Priest, like Melchizedek

<sup>15</sup>The matter becomes even plainer; a different priest has appeared, who is like Melchizedek. <sup>16</sup>He was not made a priest by human rules and regulations; he became a priest through the power of a life which has no end. <sup>17</sup>For the scripture says, "You will be a priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek." <sup>18</sup>The old rule, then, is set aside, because it was weak and useless. <sup>19</sup>For the Law of Moses could not make anything perfect. And now a better hope has been brought in, through which we come near to God.

on? For when there is a 12  
change of the priesthood,  
there must also be a change  
of the law. He of whom these 13  
things are said belonged to a  
different tribe, and no one  
from that tribe has ever  
served at the altar. For it is 14  
clear that our Lord descend-  
ed from Judah, and in regard  
to that tribe Moses said  
nothing about priests. And 15  
what we have said is even  
more clear if another priest  
like Melchizedek appears,  
one who has become a priest 16  
not on the basis of a regula-  
tion as to his ancestry but on  
the basis of the power of an  
indestructible life. For it is 17  
declared:

"You are a priest forever,  
just like Melchizedek."

The former regulation is 18  
set aside because it was weak  
and useless (for the law made 19  
nothing perfect), and a bet-  
ter hope is introduced, by  
which we draw near to God.

12. **For when.** "Since the Law was given on the basis of the Levitical priesthood, when that changes, the Law must also change. This is proof, then, that the Law of Moses has been superseded."

13. **And our Lord.** "Now, it is clear that God intended to transfer the priesthood away from the Tribe of Levi, because He said of our Lord Jesus: 'You will be a priest forever, in the priestly order of Melchizedek' (see *Heb. 5:6*). Our Lord belonged to a different tribe, and no member of that tribe (Judah) could ever serve as a priest under the Law. Only members of the Tribe of Levi could serve under the Law."

14. **It is well known.** "Every Jew knows that the Messiah was to come from the Tribe of Judah, and that our Lord came from that tribe. But Moses did not authorize priests to come from this tribe!"

15. **A different priest has appeared.** "God's vow makes this matter even plainer! Our Lord Jesus was made High Priest by God's vow (*verse 21*)!" Like Melchizedek, Jesus is both High Priest and King! This is proof of *verse 12*.

16. **He was not.** "Jesus our Lord did not become a high priest through human rules and regulations. He became a high priest through the power of his endless life, which makes it possible for him to serve forever!!! This is in contrast with the Levitical priesthood, who die and terminate their service."

17. **For the scripture says.** *Psalms 110:4*. "Like Melchizedek, he will continue to be both priest and king. His service will not terminate, as long as his people have any need of either priest or king!"

18. **Is set aside.** "The old rule of the Law of Moses is totally superseded! It was weak and useless, because it could neither reform nor forgive sinners." [The forgiveness of sins under the Law was based upon what Jesus would do (*Heb. 9:15*). The Law did what God wanted it to do, but it was not *final*."]

19. **Could not make anything perfect.** The Law was only temporary! By itself, it could not prepare men and women for eternal life! "*For the blood of bulls and goats can never take sins away*" (*Heb. 10:4*). **And now a better hope.** "The better priesthood of Christ is the basis of a better hope, through which we can come near to God and call him *our Father!*"

<sup>20</sup>In addition, there is also God's vow. There was no such vow when the others were made priests. <sup>21</sup>But Jesus became a priest by means of a vow, when God said to him,

"The Lord has made a vow,  
and will not change his mind:  
'You will be a priest forever.' "

<sup>22</sup>This difference, then, makes Jesus the guarantee also of a better covenant.

<sup>23</sup>There is another difference: those other priests were many because they died and could not continue their work. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus lives on forever, and his work as priest does not pass on to someone else. <sup>25</sup>And so he is able, now and always, to save those who come to God through him, because he lives forever to plead with God for them.

<sup>26</sup>Jesus, then, is the High Priest that meets our needs. He is holy; he has no fault or sin in him; he has been set apart from sinful men and raised

And it was not without 20  
an oath! Others became  
priests without any oath, but 21  
he became a priest with an  
oath when God said to him:

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

Because of this oath, Jesus 22  
has become the guarantee of  
a better covenant.

Now there were many of 23  
those priests, since death  
prevented them from contin-  
uing in office; but because 24  
Jesus lives forever, he has a  
permanent priesthood.  
Therefore he is able to save 25  
completely those who come  
to God through him, because  
he always lives to intercede  
for them.

Such a high priest meets 26  
our need—one who is holy,  
blameless, pure, set apart  
from sinners, exalted above

20. **There is also God's vow.** "In addition to the *better hope*, God's vow that made Jesus our High Priest is also proof that the Good News is superior to the Law of Moses." God's vow affirms that he will not change his promise!!! Compare *Gen. 22:16-18; Deut. 1:34-35; 4:21; Psalm 89:4; 110:4*.

21. **By means of a vow.** "This means that an unchangeable priesthood has been conferred on Jesus our Lord!" The quotation is *Psalm 110:4*.

22. **This difference, then.** "God's vow, mentioned in *verse 21*, is the difference by which Jesus becomes the *guarantee* of this better covenant!"

23. **There is another difference.** "Still another reason why Jesus is superior to the Levitical priesthood: there had to be many of them, because death would not allow them to continue to serve." There were at least 83 Jewish high priests during the time from Aaron to Phineas (about 1727 years).

24. **But Jesus.** "Christ conquered death before he became High Priest! He came out of the tomb in his body (*Matt. 28:9*) and lives on forever in his body (*Luke 24:50-53* and notes)." **Does not pass on.** "No one will need to take his place, because death cannot terminate his service!"

25. **And so he is able.** I have followed *MacKnight* in viewing this through *Jewish eyes*. "Christ offered his crucified body as a sacrifice in heaven (*Heb. 8:2-3*), and as he is continually there in his crucified body, this one and the same sacrifice is always present before God! This continually declares God's act in Christ, and Christ himself continually pleads with God for us on that basis (compare *Rom. 8:34*). The Jewish high priest sprinkling blood on the *MILASTERION* (mercy seat) on top of the *box of the covenant* on the Day of Atonement (each year) was symbolic of what Jesus would do. Blood, as the symbol of death, opened the *earthly place for worship* until the next Day of Atonement (the following year). Christ's blood = death = the one sacrifice which never needs to be repeated!!! Compare *Heb. 9:11-14*."

26. **Jesus, then.** He meets our needs, but the Jewish priests could not meet our needs! **No fault or sin.** The Jewish priests did have faults and sins. **He has been set apart.** The Jewish high priest had to be set apart and ritually purified during the seven days before the Day of Atonement (see *Lev. 16:1-28*). Christ is greater, because he has been raised above the heavens!!!



above the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He is not like other high priests; he does not need to offer sacrifices every day, for his own sins first, and then for the sins of the people. He offered one sacrifice, once and for all, when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup>The Law of Moses appoints men who are imperfect to be high priests; but God's promise with the vow, which came later than the Law, appoints the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

the heavens. Unlike the other <sup>27</sup> high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law <sup>28</sup> appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

**Jesus Our High Priest**

**8** Here is the whole point of what we are saying: we have such a high priest as this, who sits at the right of the throne of the Divine Majesty in heaven. <sup>2</sup>He serves as high priest in the Most Holy Place, that is, in the real tent which was put up by the Lord, not by man.

**The High Priest of a New Covenant**

**8** The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and animal sacrifices to God; and so our high priest must also have something to offer. <sup>4</sup>If he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer the gifts accord-

Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>

27. **He is not like.** He had no need to first offer a sacrifice for himself, because he had no sins (*Heb. 4:15*). **Once and for all.** (1) He did not need to offer a sacrifice for himself. (2) He did not need to offer a sacrifice each year, but only once! (3) The sacrifice which he offered, was not bulls and goats, but HIMSELF!

28. **The Law of Moses.** "The descendants of Aaron, whom the Law appointed high priests, were imperfect and had to offer sacrifices for their own sins." **But God's promise with the vow.** "This is how much better the Son is, who is our High Priest! He is sinless! He lives forever! He is perfect!"

1. **Here is the whole point.** "This is the climax!" **We have such a high priest.** "The High Priest we have been describing, who is without fault, sinless, set apart, and raised above the heavens; this is our High Priest - Jesus Christ!" **Who sits at the right.** His greatness is shown by the fact that he *sits* at the right side of God in heaven. Compare *Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 10:12*.

2. **He serves.** Compare *Heb. 1:13* and note: The fact that Christ *sits at the right side of the throne* shows that he has become the one who serves as high priest of heaven. **In the real tent.** [Tabernacle is an old word which means *tent*.] The man-made tent is described in *Heb. 9:2-3*. The Most Holy Place [sanctuary] in the *real tent* is heaven itself (*Heb. 9:11*).

3. **Is appointed.** "Our Lord sitting down at the right side of God in the real tent is proof that he offered an acceptable sacrifice for sin. The very purpose for which a high priest is appointed shows this. As our High Priest, Christ must have something to offer in heaven, which is the only place where he could serve."

4. **If he were on earth.** Jesus could not possibly offer sacrifices in the earthly temple at Jerusalem [which was standing at the time this was written]. He came from the wrong tribe (*Heb. 7:13-14*), and there were already priests who were serving in the earthly temple.

ing to the Jewish Law. <sup>5</sup>The work they do as priests is really only a copy and a shadow of what is in heaven. It is the same as it was with Moses. When he was about to put up the tent, God told him, "Be sure to make everything like the pattern you were shown on the mountain." <sup>6</sup>But, as it is, Jesus has been given priestly work which is much greater than theirs, just as the covenant which he arranged between God and men is a better one, because it is based on promises of better things.

<sup>7</sup>If there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, there would have been no need for a second one. <sup>8</sup>But God finds fault with his people when he says,

"The days are coming, says the Lord,  
when I will draw up a new covenant  
with the people of Israel,  
and with the tribe of Judah.

They serve at a sanctuary <sup>5</sup>  
that is a copy and shadow of  
what is in heaven. This is  
why Moses was warned when  
he was about to build the  
tabernacle: "See to it that  
you make everything accord-  
ing to the pattern shown you  
on the mountain." <sup>6</sup>But the  
ministry Jesus has received is  
as superior to theirs as the  
covenant of which he is me-  
diator is superior to the old  
one, and it is founded on bet-  
ter promises.

For if there had been <sup>7</sup>  
nothing wrong with that first  
covenant, no place would  
have been sought for an-  
other. But God found fault <sup>8</sup>  
with the people and said:

"The time is coming, says  
the Lord,  
when I will make a new  
covenant  
with the house of Israel  
and with the house of  
Judah.

5. **Only a copy and a shadow.** "Still further proof is that the work which the priests of the Jewish Law do, imitates the true service in heaven. That is, it makes us know there is true service in heaven, even though the things that priests of the Law do are not that *true service*." **Like the pattern.** God's strict instruction to Moses is used here as proof that the priests served in the earthly tent in imitation of the heavenly things. *MacKnight* thinks that God explained to Moses that exactness was necessary in constructing the earthly tent for worship and the things that were to be done there, because they were to be a copy and shadow of the *true tent* and *true service* in heaven.

6. **Jesus has been given.** The Jews thought the earthly service of their priests was perfect. But Christ has been given work which is much greater than theirs!!! **Just as.** The Jews were proud of the covenant between themselves and God. But the covenant which Jesus arranged between God and men is much better, with much better promises. Compare *1 Cor. 2:7-10; Rom. 8:1-4* and notes.

7. **If there had been.** "If the first covenant given on Sinai had been faultless, and sinners could have been put right with God and forgiven by it, a second covenant would never have been introduced!" See *Heb. 7:18-19*.

8. **But God finds fault with his people.** "This is proved by the prophet Jeremiah, through whom God spoke about a new covenant." *Jer. 31:31-34*. The Law ritually purified people, but did not purify their conscience (see *Heb. 10:2*). A new covenant had to come, because: (1) the first covenant was weak and useless (*Heb. 7:18-19*); (2) Jeremiah had predicted a new covenant; (3) when Jeremiah spoke about a new covenant, this made the old covenant obsolete. **When I will draw up.** It was God who acted in Christ! With 20/20 hindsight, we see God's promise of the New Covenant in the words of *Gen. 3:15*. **Israel** = God's spiritual Israel among the Gentiles = every Gentile Christian. **Judah** = God's people among the Jews = every Jewish Christian.

<sup>9</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They were not faithful to the covenant I made with them, and so I paid no attention to them, says the Lord.

<sup>10</sup>Now, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel in the days to come, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>11</sup>None of them will have to teach his fellow-citizen, or tell his fellow-countryman, 'Know the Lord.'

Because they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.

<sup>12</sup>I will have mercy on their transgressions, and will no longer remember their sins."

It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them,

says the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, says the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'

because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

I will forgive their wickedness, and will remember their sins no more."

9. **It will not be like.** The first covenant dealt with symbols and externals. The new covenant deals with realities and motivations. **They were not faithful.** When the Jews were not faithful to their end of the bargain, God turned his back on them and allowed them to be taken over by foreign powers. The new covenant is a *more permanent thing*, since it is based upon God's act in Christ!

10. **This is the covenant.** This New Covenant: (1) is inward or spiritual; (2) is individual, and therefore universal; (3) is kind and allows forgiveness. The Law is a curse (*James 2:10; Gal. 3:10*). Whatever forgiveness those who lived under the Law received, came because of God's act in Christ (see *Heb. 9:15*). **Minds . . . hearts.** This is in contrast to writing them on stone tablets. **Their God . . . my people.** Compare *Rev. 21:3* and note.

11. **Will have to teach.** By the old covenant, every Jewish baby was born into the covenant relationship and had to be instructed in his heritage. If they were not taught, they did not know God at all. But no one can be part of the new covenant without first knowing both the Father and the Son. The Book of Acts shows that all become part of this new covenant by faith in Christ, tiring from sin, and being buried with Christ in the liquid grave. **Because they will all know me.** *MacKnight* sees in this the prediction of *Isa. 11:9*. "Because the earth will be as full of awareness of the Eternal, as the water fills up the sea" (Zamenhof).

12. **I will have mercy.** When they become part of this New Covenant, all their sins will be canceled! Under the old covenant, the people remembered their sins (*Heb. 10:3*) and were never free of them. Christians continue to have their sins canceled, on the basis of *1 John 1:5-10*.

<sup>13</sup>By speaking of a new covenant, God has made the first one old; and anything that is getting old and worn-out will soon disappear.

By calling this covenant 13 "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

### Earthly and Heavenly Worship

#### Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle

**9** The first covenant had rules for worship and a man-made place for worship as well. <sup>2</sup>A tent was put up, the outside one, which was called the Holy Place. In it were the lamp, the table, and the bread offered to God. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was the tent called the Most Holy Place. <sup>4</sup>In it were the gold altar for the burning of incense, and the box of the covenant, all covered with gold. The box contained the gold jar with the manna in it, Aaron's rod that had sprouted leaves, and the two stone tablets with

**9** Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up; in its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread. This was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered chest of the covenant. This chest contained the golden jar of manna, Aaron's rod that had budded, and the stone tablets of

13. **God has made the first one old.** "By promising a new covenant, God made the first covenant obsolete and showed that the whole Age of Moses would be terminated and superseded. In actual fact, the Age of Moses terminated at the Cross (see *Col. 2:14* and note). But the Jewish priests continued their service in the temple until Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. See notes on *Matt. 24:29-31*.

1. **The first covenant.** To show that it was both right and proper that the Law of Moses and the Jewish priesthood were terminated and superseded, a contrast is made between the worship of the old and new covenants. The rules for worship were a copy or imitation of Christ's work in heaven. The man-made place for worship was a shadow or silhouette of the true place for worship. Nothing in the Jewish worship was haphazard or meaningless. God had carefully patterned this to prefigure or show beforehand, the true worship of the Good News. Compare *Heb. 8:5* and note.

2. **A tent.** The original setting up of the tent and the beginning of the Jewish worship which was to continue some 1,700 years (*Exod. 40*) is used for this contrast (rather than the temple worship). **The outside one.** The Holy Place, where the priests served daily. **The lamp.** This lamp had seven arms or branches which had cups for holding oil at their ends. Wicks were floated in the oil, and lighted. Here there is one lamp with seven lamps. In *Rev. 1:12* there are seven lamp-stands. **The table,** on which were kept twelve loaves of bread offered to God, each loaf of which contained two-fifths of a bushel of flour. See *Exod. 24:3-5*.

3. **Behind the second curtain.** The Holy Place was separated from the Most Holy Place by this second curtain. Compare *Heb. 10:20*. Both of these were built and furnished exactly like the pattern which God showed to Moses. No one was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place, except the High Priest, and then only on the Day of Atonement.

4. **The gold altar.** Much time has been spent trying to understand why this altar is mentioned as being in the Most Holy Place. Perhaps there were two??? Certainly the Jews to whom this Letter was written understood. **Incense.** See *Rev. 8:3-4* and notes. **The box of the covenant.** [Ark is an old word meaning box.] See *Exod. 25:10-22*. **The gold jar.** *Exod. 16:32-34*. **Aaron's rod.** *Num. 17:1-11*. **The two stone tablets.** *Deut. 10:1-5*. Only the two stone tablets seemed to still be in the box of the covenant when Solomon's temple was dedicated (*1 Kings 8:9*). The box of the covenant disappeared when Solomon's temple was destroyed (*2 Kings 25:9*).

the commandments written on them. <sup>5</sup>Above the box were the glorious creatures representing the Divine Presence, with their wings spread over the place where sins were forgiven. But now is not the time to explain everything in detail.

<sup>6</sup>This is how those things were arranged. The priests go into the outside tent every day to perform their duties; <sup>7</sup>but only the High Priest goes into the inside tent, and he does so only once a year. He takes blood with him which he offers to God on behalf of himself and for the sins which the people have committed without knowing they were sinning. <sup>8</sup>The Holy Spirit clearly teaches from all these arrangements that the way into the Most Holy Place has not yet been opened as long as the outside tent still stands. <sup>9</sup>This is a figure which refers to the present time. It means that the gifts and animal sacrifices offered to God cannot make the worshiper's heart perfect.

the covenant. Above the chest were the cherubim of the Glory overshadowing the place of atonement. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

5. **Above the box.** A cover over the box of the covenant, called the HILASTERION (place where sins are forgiven), was made out of one solid piece of gold and included two winged figures as part of it, facing each other over the area where the blood was sprinkled each Day of Atonement.

6. **This is how.** There was constant activity in the outside tent. The ordinary priests came in and out as they burned incense at the morning and evening sacrifices, in keeping the lamp in working order, in replacing the bread offered to God (the bread of the Presence). All this was still being done in Jerusalem in the temple, as this Letter was being written.

7. **But only the High Priest.** He alone was permitted to enter the inside tent; only once each year (Day of Atonement); with blood. **He takes blood.** The *Expositor's Greek Testament* says: "On that day the High Priest was to enter the Holiest at least *thrice*, first with the incense, then with the blood of the bullock which atoned for his own sins and those of his house [family], and finally with the blood of the goat for the sins of the people." See *Lev. 16:11-34; Exod. 30:10-25*.

8. **The Holy Spirit clearly teaches.** The Spirit is the *author* of the ritual used in the tent, and of the teaching *inherent* in every part of the ritual, furniture, etc. Compare *1 Pet. 1:11-12*. **Has not yet been opened.** This limited access to the Most Holy Place in the tent, showed that worship and fellowship with God were not yet open to men. While the outside tent (symbolic of the ritual and worship that was the basis of The Law) still stood as part of God's pattern for worship, this showed that the very Presence of God was *out of reach* for mankind. This proves that the Law had to be superseded by something better!

9. **This is a figure.** To the Jewish mind, *the present time* meant the Age of Moses. See notes on *Heb. 2:5; 6:5*. This means that the arrangement with the outside tent blocking the way into the inside tent, was proof that the Mosaic worship could not produce union and fellowship with God. **Cannot make.** These things could not remove guilt from the conscience. See *Acts 13:38-39*.

<sup>10</sup>They have to do only with food, drink, and various cleansing ceremonies. These are all outward rules, which apply only until the time when God will reform all things.

<sup>11</sup>But Christ has already come as the High Priest of the good things that are already here. The tent in which he serves is greater and more perfect; it is not made by men, that is, it is not a part of this created world. <sup>12</sup>When Christ went through the tent and entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place, he did not take the blood of goats and calves to offer as sacrifice; rather, he took his own blood and obtained eternal salvation for us. <sup>13</sup>The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the burnt calf are sprinkled on the people who are ritually unclean, and make them clean by taking away their ritual impurity. <sup>14</sup>Since this is true, how much more is accomplished by the blood of Christ! Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself as a perfect

They are only a matter of 10 food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

#### The Blood of Christ

When Christ came as high 11 priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by 12 means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and 13 bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will 14 the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to

10. **They have to do only with.** The ritual worship which formed the basis of the Law was only concerned with outward rules. These things apply only until the time when the New Covenant is put into effect. Remember, these Jews still thought in terms of the Law. Compare *Col. 2:20-23* and notes. **When God will reform** = time of the new order = the Age of Christ, which began at the Cross. See notes on *Matt. 19:28; Heb. 2:5; 6:5*.

11. **But Christ has already come.** "The time when God will reform all things is here already! Christ has already come! He is the High Priest of the good things (which the Law could not supply) that are already here!" This is the climax. *The historical Christ* is the whole turning point in God's Plan! **The tent in which he serves.** See *verse 24*. It is not a copy, but the real thing!!!

12. **When Christ.** The Aaronic high priest went through the outside tent into the Most Holy Place, taking the blood of goats and calves, and made atonement for one more year. Jesus went into the Most Holy Place once and for all, with his own blood, and eternal salvation is the result! He does not need to offer himself a second time!

13. **The blood.** This is the way people were made clean by the Aaronic priesthood. Continual sacrifices were offered to God by his direction in the Law. These came to a climax in the Day of Atonement. Blood, symbolic of both death and life (*Lev. 17:11*), was very important in the ritual of the Law (*verse 22*).

14. **By the blood of Christ!** "If the blood of animals takes away ritual impurity, how much more will be accomplished by the blood of God's Son!!!" **Through the eternal Spirit.** *MacKnight* says: "Christ is said to have offered himself *through* the eternal Spirit, because he was raised from the dead by the

sacrifice to God. His blood will make our consciences clean from useless works, so that we may serve the living God.

<sup>15</sup>For this reason Christ is the one who arranges a new covenant, so that those who have been called by God may receive the eternal blessings that God has promised. This can be done because there has been a death which sets men free from the wrongs they did while they were under the first covenant.

<sup>16</sup>Where there is a will, it has to be proved that the man who made it has died. <sup>17</sup>For a will means nothing while the man who made it is alive; it goes into effect only after his death. <sup>18</sup>That is why even the first covenant was made good only with the use of blood. <sup>19</sup>First, Moses told the people all the commandments, as set forth in the Law. Then he took the blood of calves, together with water, and sprinkled both the book of the Law and all the people with hyssop and scarlet

God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

For this reason Christ is 15 the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

In the case of a will, it is 16 necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first 18 covenant was not put into effect without blood. When 19 Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all

Spirit, *1 Pet. 3:18*; consequently he was enabled by the Spirit to offer himself to God; that is, to present his crucified body before the throne of God in heaven." See note on *Heb. 7:25*. **Our consciences clean.** "Those under the Law could not lose their sense of guilt and their fear of punishment. But the blood of Christ will take away guilt and fear, so that we may be free to serve the living God!"

**15. For this reason.** "Because the blood of Christ is so much greater than the blood of animals." **Christ is the one.** "He is the High Priest who *hands out* the blessings of the New Covenant; and the sacrifice who makes the New Covenant possible by his bloody death!" See *Heb. 8:6-8* and notes. **May receive.** Does this mean that Abraham, Isaac, etc., were still under the sentence of "sin and death" until God acted in Christ??? No, but their forgiveness was based upon what Christ would do. God's mercy, all the way from extending the life of guilty Adam, to the end of time itself, is based upon the ONE ACT in Christ!!! **A death which sets men free.** "All the animals who died on Jewish altars could not set men free. The death of God's Son does set men free!!!" Compare *Heb. 11:39-40*.

**16. Where there is a will.** The same Greek word means both covenant and will. Now the explanation shifts to the *probation of a will*. "To show why Christ had to die to make the New Covenant possible, I remind you that a will does not go into effect until the man who made it dies."

**17. For a will means nothing.** "During a man's lifetime, he may do as he pleases with his will, because it is not valid. His death is necessary for it to go into effect, just as an animal must die on the altar to become a sacrifice to God."

**18. Was made good only.** "From the beginning, God made good his covenant by the death of a sacrifice. Blood, of course, is a symbol of death."

**19. First, Moses.** This explains how the first covenant was made good with blood. Moses read the commandments (*Exod. 24:3-8*), and used scarlet wool tied on branches of hyssop to sprinkle the mixture of blood and water on the book of the Law and all the people.

wool. <sup>20</sup>He said, "This is the blood which seals the covenant that God has commanded you to obey." <sup>21</sup>In the same way, Moses also sprinkled the blood on the tent and over all the things used in worship. <sup>22</sup>Indeed, according to the Law, almost everything is made clean by blood; and sins are forgiven only if blood is poured out.

### Christ's Sacrifice Takes Away Sins

<sup>23</sup>These things, which are copies of the heavenly originals, had to be made clean in this way. But the heavenly things themselves require much better sacrifices. <sup>24</sup>For Christ did not go into a holy place made by men, a copy of the real one. He went into heaven itself, where he now appears on our behalf in the presence of God. <sup>25</sup>The Jewish High Priest goes into the Holy Place every year with the blood of an animal. But Christ did not go in to offer himself many times; <sup>26</sup>for then he would have had to suffer many times ever since the creation of the world. Instead, he has now appeared once and for all, when all ages of

the people. He said, "This is <sup>20</sup> the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." In the same <sup>21</sup> way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law <sup>22</sup> requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

It was necessary, then, for <sup>23</sup> the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not <sup>24</sup> enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did <sup>25</sup> he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would <sup>26</sup> have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the

20. **This is the blood.** The blood ratified the covenant. Note that this covenant contained the Ten Commandments, and was the old covenant which was superseded by the New Covenant of Christ. [The tent for worship was not completed until about a year later.]

21. **In the same way.** These things also were *ratified* and dedicated to God by the use of blood.

22. **Almost everything.** A few things were made clean by water, a few by fire, and a few with the ashes of the burnt calf (red heifer). But in general, it was blood which was used. **And sins are forgiven.** Jews understood this. The animal dying on the altar represented forgiveness which was imputed to the one for whom the sacrifice was offered.

23. **These things.** The tent, all the things used in worship, and all the priests themselves. **But the heavenly things.** Animal sacrifices are not good enough to make clean the heavenly things. This means that God would not admit sinners into the heavenly world by anything less than the blood of his Son!!!

24. **For Christ.** Christ did not offer his crucified body in the holy place of human construction. **He went into heaven itself.** There in the presence of God himself, Jesus pleads for us! The High Priest does this in the earthly tent, but only in imitation of what Jesus alone can do in heaven.

25. **The Jewish High Priest.** He must go in each year with the blood of an animal. **But Christ.** Though it was necessary for Christ to open heaven to us by the sacrifice of himself, he did not need to offer himself many times.

26. **For then.** He would have had to die many times since the beginning of creation. **Instead.** Rather than dying many times, he appeared once and for all! There is no need to go back to the *many sacrifices* of the Law!!! What Jesus did is complete and has no need to be repeated again and again!!! **When all**



time are nearing the end, to remove sin through the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup>Everyone must die once, and after that be judged by God. <sup>28</sup>In the same manner, Christ also was offered in sacrifice once to take away the sins of many. He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are waiting for him.

**10** The Jewish Law is not a full and faithful model of the real things. It is only a faint outline of the good things to come. The same sacrifices are offered forever, year after year. How can the Law, then, by means of these sacrifices, make perfect the people who come to God? <sup>2</sup>If the people worshiping God had been made really clean from their sins, they would not feel guilty of sin any more, and all sacrifices would stop. <sup>3</sup>As it is, however, the sacrifices serve to

end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

#### Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

**10** The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual

**ages of time.** This means that Christ's sacrifice is independent of time and valid as a single act!!! If there was to be ONE sacrifice for all ages of time, then the ages *end*-at that event. This is the *completion* of God's Plan to put men right with himself.

**27. Everyone must die once.** Man dies only once, and the next thing for him is the judgment. [This makes the idea of reincarnation impossible.] Christ dies only once, and the next thing for him is the Second Coming.

**28. Once to take away.** He died only ONCE to *buy men for God* (Rev. 5:9). **But to save those.** See Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:8.

**1. The Jewish Law.** The Jewish Law was a thing of pride, even to the point of fanaticism. Compare Acts 21:20-28 and notes. **Is not.** The Law did not display the *coming realities* in a form that people could understand. The earthly tent and the priests who served in it were not the *reality* of God's blessing for man. **It is only a faint outline.** The greatness of the Law was only a faint outline of the **REALITY** which is Christ. Compare 1 John 5:20. **The same sacrifices.** This is implied in the previous chapter. "If these same sacrifices must be offered over and over again, they are useless! If they had the ability to make people perfect, there would be no need to offer them more than one time!"

**2. Had been made really clean.** "The fact that they continued to feel both guilt and fear of punishment shows they were not really made clean from their sins. When guilt and fear are removed by the sacrifice, it has no need to be repeated."

**3. The sacrifices serve to remind people.** "The sacrifices of the Law on the Day of Atonement and the ritual with the scapegoat only serve to remind people of their sin and guilt, and increase their fear of punishment." [Some Christian groups are guilty of doing this also.]

remind people of their sins, year after year. <sup>4</sup>For the blood of bulls and goats can never take sins away.

<sup>5</sup>For this reason, when Christ was about to come into the world, he said to God:

"You do not want sacrifices and offerings, but you have prepared a body for me.

<sup>6</sup>You are not pleased with animals burned whole on the altar.

or with sacrifices to take away sins.

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, 'Here I am, God, to do what you want me to, just as it is written of me in the book of the Law.' "

<sup>8</sup>First he said, "You neither want nor are you pleased with sacrifices and offerings, or with animals burned on the altar and the sacrifices to take away sins." He said this even though all these sacrifices are offered according to the Law.

<sup>9</sup>Then he said, "Here I am, God, to do what you want me to do." So God does away with all the old sacrifices and puts the sacrifice of Christ in

reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 4

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 5

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;

with burnt offerings and sin offerings 6

you were not pleased.

Then I said, 'Here I am— it is written about me in the scroll— 7

I have come to do your will, O God.' "

First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings 8

and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here 9

I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first

4. **Can never take sins away.** The animals killed on Jewish altars had a moral effect on the people, and pointed forward to the Messiah, but had no real effect on sins. Micah taught the same thing, and implied this was why the pagans used human sacrifices. "*Will the Lord be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep, or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my firstborn child to pay for my sins?*" (Micah 6:7).

5. **For this reason.** To show that the sacrifices of the Law were useless, and could not take sins away. **He said to God.** The quotation is from *Psalms 40:6-8* Septuagint. This was a prophecy of how Christ would view the ritual of the Law and his own mission. The point is that the *Son's offering of himself* is the true sacrifice, which as prophecy shows, God wanted to be made. **You do not want** the sacrifices and offerings of the Law, because they are weak and useless. **But you have prepared.** As the Eternal Logos, Christ did not have a body. **But** the prophecy is that he would come in human form. See *1 John 4:1-3*. Jesus had to take our *flesh and blood* to be able to destroy the Devil (*Heb. 2:14-15* and notes) by dying on the Cross.

6. **You are not pleased.** These were intended to be temporary. In time the people became superstitious toward them.

7. **Then I said.** The Psalmist shows Christ as a volunteer who comes of his own free will to do what God wants him to do! Compare *John 10:17-18*. **Just as it is written.** The Old Testament itself was full of prophecies about the coming Messiah who would die as *The Sin Offering* for all time!!! See *John 5:39*.

8. **First he said.** "The Only Son, who came into the world to disclose The Father to mankind (*John 1:18; Heb. 1:2*), said that God was not pleased with the ritual worship of the Law." **Even though.** "Yes, God did command them to be offered. **But** they were all to be terminated and superseded when the Messiah came into the world and offered himself as *the true sacrifice*."

9. **Then he said.** "He volunteered to do this mission for God." **So God does away.** "God himself terminates the old sacrifices of the first covenant! God himself puts the sacrifice of Christ in their place! It is God himself who supersedes the old covenant by the new covenant!"

their place. <sup>10</sup>Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, we are all made clean from sin by the offering that he made of his own body, once and for all.

<sup>11</sup>Every Jewish priest stands and performs his services every day and offers the same sacrifices many times. But these sacrifices can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, and offering that is good forever, and then sat down at the right side of God. <sup>13</sup>There he now waits until God puts his enemies as a footstool under his feet. <sup>14</sup>With one sacrifice, then, he has made perfect forever those who are clean from sin.

<sup>15</sup>And the Holy Spirit also gives us his witness. First he says,

<sup>16</sup>“This is the covenant that I will make with them in the days to come, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and write them on their minds.”

to establish the second, And <sup>10</sup> by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day every priest <sup>11</sup> stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time <sup>12</sup> one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits <sup>13</sup> for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect <sup>14</sup> forever those who are being made holy.

The Holy Spirit also testi- <sup>15</sup> fies to us about this. First he says:

“This is the covenant I <sup>16</sup> will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

10. **Because.** What God wanted, that the sacrifices of the Law could not do, was to make men clean from their sin. Notice that the sacrifices were not to *appease an angry God*, but to *change estranged children*! Because Jesus did what God wanted him to do (fulfill the will of God), we (who are Christians) are all made clean from sin. **By the offering.** Some Jews had said that Christianity had no offerings for sin, but that the Law did. Jesus Christ made the offering of his own crucified body in heaven itself. This is so perfect and complete that it had only to be done ONCE!!! We who are made clean from sin by *Christ on the cross* (1 Cor. 1:23 and notes) are made friends of God (2 Cor. 5:18-19) who are able to worship Him here and now, and enter the Eternal World later.

11. **Every Jewish priest.** “You can plainly see the futility of the sacrifices of the Law!”

12. **Christ, however.** “Notice the contrast!” **Offered one sacrifice.** “Not many times!” **That is good forever.** “What Christ DID will never be terminated or superseded!” **And then sat down.** “The Jewish priest stands and performs his service every day. Christ offered one sacrifice and sat down. The *completeness* of Christ’s ONE SACRIFICE is proved by the fact that he did sit down and now sits at God’s right side.”

13. **There he now waits.** “Until God destroys his enemies!” See *Heb. 1:13* and note. This means: “Christ must rule the universe until God crushes all his enemies!” Compare *Jude 14-15*; *1 Cor. 15:25*.

14. **With one sacrifice.** “This one act of God in Christ is the perfect antidote to the guilt of sin and the fear of punishment. It is available to everyone who will reach out through faith to seize it and make themselves part of it!!! He has made perfect forever those who are clean from sin because they participated in His sacrifice (*Rom. 6:3-11* and notes).”

15. **And the Holy Spirit.** “The claim just made (*verse 14*) is verified by the Holy Spirit himself.”

16. **This is the covenant.** See *Heb. 8:10-12* and notes.

<sup>17</sup>And then he says, "I will not remember their sins and wicked deeds any longer."<sup>18</sup>So when these have been forgiven, an offering to take away sins is no longer needed.

### Let Us Come Near to God

<sup>19</sup>We have, then, brothers, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. <sup>20</sup>He opened for us a new way, a living way, through the curtain—that is, through his own body. <sup>21</sup>We have a great priest in charge of the house of God. <sup>22</sup>Let us come near to God, then, with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been made clean from a guilty conscience, and bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep his promise.

Then he adds:

"Their sins and lawless acts  
I will remember no  
more."

And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

### A Call to Persevere

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

17. **And then he says.** This is the Holy Spirit speaking through Jeremiah. This means: "When sins are forgiven, no more sacrifices for sin are offered! When God forgives, he forgets!!! Every sin forgiven, is canceled, and no longer exists!!!"

18. **Is no longer needed.** "This is why Christianity does not have the continuing sacrifices which the Law had. When sin is canceled and God forgets it, no more sacrifice is necessary!!!" [But notice *Acts 8:20-24* and notes.]

19. **We have, then.** "As our High Priest, Christ has opened the way for Christians to go into the Most Holy Place, by the sacrifice of his crucified body."

20. **Through the curtain.** "Only the Jewish High Priest could go through the curtain into the Most Holy Place in the inside tent. Christ has opened for both Jews and Gentiles a new way, a living-way through the curtain which is his own body. For us, the *torn curtain (Matt. 27:51)* which admits us to the true Most Holy Place, is the human body of Christ!"

21. **We have.** "Not only has our great priest opened the Most Holy Place to us; not only does he continue to serve as our High Priest in God's presence; but our great priest is also God's Son who serves over God's house!" [God's house = the true Temple and true Israel (*Heb. 3:6*).]

22. **Let us come near to God.** Contrast this with *Heb. 12:18-21*. "We have complete confidence that we can come near to God! We can worship the Pure and Undeified One, because through Christ we are made to become pure and undefiled!!!" **Sincere heart.** "Not with empty formalism and endless rites, but *in spirit and truth (John 4:23)* and note)." **Sure faith.** "Believing not only that *God is (Heb. 11:6)*, but that our Great Priest has opened for us a new way to reach Him!" **That have been made clean.** See *Heb. 9:13* and note. **Bodies washed with pure water.** The Jewish mind would connect this with Christian baptism. See notes on *Acts 19:3*. Compare *Exod. 29:4; 30:20; 40:30*.

23. **Let us hold on firmly.** *MacKnight* says: "And being washed in body with the clean water of baptism, whereby we professed our faith in Christ as our only High Priest, let us hold fast [firmly] the confession [profession] of our hope of salvation through his ministrations [services for us], unmoved by the threats of our persecutors; for faithful is he who hath promised us pardon through Christ."

<sup>24</sup>Let us be concerned with one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another, all the more since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming near.

<sup>26</sup>For there is no longer any sacrifice that will take away sins if we purposely go on sinning after the truth has been made known to us. <sup>27</sup>Instead, all that is left is to be afraid of what will happen: the Judgment and the fierce fire which will destroy those who oppose God! <sup>28</sup>Anyone who disobeys the Law of Moses is put to death, without any mercy, when judged guilty from the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>What, then, of the man who despises the Son of God? who treats as a cheap thing the blood of God's covenant which cleansed him from sin? who insults the Spirit of grace? Just think how much worse is

ful. And let us consider how <sup>24</sup> we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting <sup>25</sup> together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

If we deliberately keep on <sup>26</sup> sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone <sup>28</sup> who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much <sup>29</sup> more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of

24. **With one another.** See *Heb. 3:13* and note. Christians are not to quarrel and fight with each other, but rather to motivate each other to show love and to do good!

25. **Let us not give up the habit.** It was not God's plan for individual Christians to exist in isolation, but for them to form *communities*. To fulfill the command of *verse 24*, Christians must meet together for worship and encouragement. Persecution may have seemed like a good excuse to quit meeting together. [The Greek does not use *SUNAGOGUE* (The Assembly), but *EPISUNAGOGEN HEAUTON* (a leading together of selves). This would include both formal and informal gatherings. Compare *Acts 2:44-47*.] **The Day of the Lord.** Since this is written to Jewish Christians, the Day is probably the destruction of Jerusalem. On that Day, the power of the unbelieving Jews was destroyed.

26. **For there is no longer.** "Giving up the habit of meeting together" in *verse 25* is not indifference or neglect, but a deliberate act. Some would renounce the New Covenant and try to go back to the sacrifices of the Law. But since Christ has offered the sacrifice of himself, **THERE IS NO OTHER SACRIFICE!!!**

27. **Instead.** "Since Christ is the only sacrifice for sin, if you leave him, all that is left for you is the Judgment and the fierce fire of destruction!"

28. **Anyone who disobeys.** "God's justice in refusing to forgive those who renounce the Good News should be clear to you. Those who rebelled against the Law of Moses were put to death without any mercy. The evidence of two or three witnesses was enough to convict them."

29. **Who despises the Son of God?** "You see how much harsher punishment will come on any who rebel against the Son of God and renounce the Good News!" **The blood of God's covenant.** See *Heb. 9:15-17; 13:20*. See note on *Heb. 6:6*. **Who insults the Spirit.** The Spirit of grace is the unique gift of the Christian System (see *John 7:37-39* and notes). This makes the Holy Spirit the exact opposite (direct antithesis) to the Law of Moses (see *Gal. 3:2*). One who renounced the Good News, must have then said the miraculous gifts came from the Devil (see *Matt. 12:31-32*). This would be an *eternal sin*, which they would not turn away from, and which God then could not forgive!

the punishment he will deserve! <sup>30</sup>For we know who said, "I will take revenge, I will repay"; and who also said, "The Lord will judge his people."

<sup>31</sup>It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

<sup>32</sup>Remember how it was with you in the past. In those days, after God's light had shone on you, you suffered many things, yet were not defeated by the struggle. <sup>33</sup>You were at times publicly insulted and mistreated, and at other times you were ready to join those who were being treated in this way. <sup>34</sup>You shared the sufferings of prisoners, and when all your belongings were seized you endured your loss gladly, because you knew that you still had for yourselves something much better, which would last forever. <sup>35</sup>Do not lose your courage, then, because it brings with it a great reward. <sup>36</sup>You need to be patient, in order to do the will of God and receive what he promises. <sup>37</sup>For, as the scripture says,

"Just a little while longer,  
and he who is coming will come;  
he will not delay.

grace? For we know him who. <sup>30</sup>said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to <sup>31</sup>fall into the hands of the living God.

Remember those earlier <sup>32</sup>days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly <sup>33</sup>exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You <sup>34</sup>sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

So do not throw away your <sup>35</sup>confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very <sup>37</sup>little while,

"He who is coming will come and will not be late.

30. **For we know who said.** Since God is the real source of the New Covenant, any who renounce it and despise it must expect Him to take vengeance on them. The quotations are from *Deut. 32:35-36*.

31. **It is a terrible thing.** Since God lives forever, he can punish forever!!! It is a terrible thing to insult the Son, the Spirit, and the Christians - and then fall into the hands of the God who revenges this!!! [The unbeliever is also insulting these things and in effect calling God a liar.]

32. **Remember.** The Letter suddenly turns from God's vengeance, to appeal to their good works in the past. Compare *Gal. 3:3*; *2 Cor. 7:15*. After they had converted to Christ, they had suffered many things, yet stood strong! [There were many persecutions in Judea, such as *Acts 8:1*; *12:1*.]

33. **You were at times.** "Sometimes it was you who were publicly insulted, and other times it was your friends. You felt so strongly about it that you were ready to be a martyr with them!"

34. **You shared.** This shows how strong their faith had been in the past! *MacKnight* thinks Paul was one of the prisoners they shared with, during his first imprisonment at Rome.

35. **Do not lose your courage, then.** "Don't act like cowards, who drop their weapons and run." Evidently these Jewish Christians were undergoing some special time of persecution.

36. **You need to be patient.** "Patience, but like the farmer who, as he waits, does the things necessary to make it all come out the way he wants." See *Rom. 5:3-5* and notes.

37. **For, as the scripture says.** The quotation is *Hab. 2:3-4*. "This persecution will not last long, because Christ will come (a spiritual coming, see notes on *Matt. 24:29-31*) to terminate the opposition of the Jewish leaders and destroy the Jewish state."

<sup>38</sup>My righteous people, however, will believe and live;  
but if any of them turns back, I will not be pleased with him."

<sup>39</sup>We are not people who turn back and are lost. Instead, we have faith and are saved.

## Faith

**11** To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. <sup>2</sup>It was by their faith that the men of ancient times won God's approval.

<sup>3</sup>It is by faith that we understand that the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen.

<sup>4</sup>It was faith that made Abel offer to God a better sacrifice than Cain's. Through his faith he won God's approval as a righteous man, because God himself approved his gifts. By means of his faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

But my righteous one 38  
will live by faith.  
And if he shrinks back,  
I will not be pleased with  
him."

But we are not of those who 39  
shrink back and are de-  
stroyed, but of those who be-  
lieve and are saved.

## By Faith

**11** Now faith is being sure 1  
of what we hope for  
and certain of what we do  
not see. This is what the  
ancients were commended  
for. 2

By faith we understand 3  
that the universe was formed  
at God's command, so that  
what is seen was not made  
out of what was visible.

By faith Abel offered God 4  
a better sacrifice than Cain  
did. By faith he was com-  
mended as a righteous man,  
when God spoke well of his  
offerings. And by faith he  
still speaks, even though he  
is dead.

38. **Will believe and live.** See note on *Matt. 24:21*. No Christian Jews died in the siege of Jerusalem, because they believed and escaped before the Roman armies surrounded the city!

39. **We are not.** "We Jewish Christians are not going to turn back and be destroyed by God! We live by faith and are saved!!!"

11. **To have faith.** See note on *James 2:19* about the nature of faith. **To be sure.** Faith is the foundation on which all our hopes for the future are built. **To be certain.** Faith makes us able to treat as *real* those things we cannot see and touch. *Hatch* says: "So trust in God furnishes to the mind which has it a clear proof that the things to which God has testified exist, though they are not visible to the senses." [*We listen to the news every day, and accept by faith the things that are said, even though we could not verify them by personal experience.*]

2. **It was by their faith.** "We Christians ought to learn from the past! Look how these men of old won God's approval! As James said: 'His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions' (*James 2:22*)."

3. **That the universe was created by God's word.** The only knowledge we can have of this event which was not witnessed by human eyes, is through faith! In fact, even our knowledge of human history is only through faith in the testimony of others. **So that.** Our visible universe is the *effect* of the invisible God.

4. **That made Abel.** Since he did it by faith, it must have been in response to God's command. *MacKnight* says: "By faith, by rightly understanding and believing what was said concerning the seed of the woman's bruising the head of the serpent." Note that Abel offered a *sin offering*, while Cain offered a *fellowship offering*. **Abel still speaks.** By his example of faith. [Some connect this with *Heb. 12:24*.]

<sup>5</sup>It was faith that kept Enoch from dying. Instead, he was taken up to God, and nobody could find him, because God had taken him up. The scripture says that before Enoch was taken up he had pleased God. <sup>6</sup>No man can please God without faith. For whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him.

<sup>7</sup>It was faith that made Noah hear God's warnings about things in the future that he could not see. He obeyed God, and built an ark in which he and his family were saved. In this way he condemned the world, and received from God the righteousness that comes by faith.

<sup>8</sup>It was faith that made Abraham obey when God called him, and go out to a country which God had promised to give him. He left his own country without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he lived in the country that God had promised him, as though he were a foreigner. He lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who received the same promise from God. <sup>10</sup>For Abraham was waiting for the city which God has designed and built, the city with permanent foundations.

By faith Enoch was taken <sup>5</sup> from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without <sup>6</sup> faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

By faith Noah, when <sup>7</sup> warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

By faith Abraham, when <sup>8</sup> called to go to a place he would later receive as his possession, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith <sup>9</sup> he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward <sup>10</sup> to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

5. **That kept Enoch from dying.** *Gen. 5:24* Septuagint. Though living in a world of sinners, Enoch pleased God! Enoch's *faith and example* verifies the things said in *verse 1*.

6. **No man.** "Enoch's faith brought him to God. But unbelief will drive a man away from God. *Unbelief* calls God a liar!" For whoever comes. No one can come to God unless he believes: (1) that God exists; (2) that God rewards those who seek him. This also verifies *verse 1*.

7. **That made Noah hear.** The Flood was something as yet unknown in all of human history. Some think *Gen. 2:5-6* implies that it had never rained, when God warned Noah. He obeyed God. Noah acted on the basis of his faith! He condemned the world. His faith condemned those who would not believe. Compare *Matt. 12:41* and note. And received from God. See *1 Pet. 3:20-21*.

8. **That made Abraham obey.** He abandoned his native country and went into an unknown area, when God told him to do this. Without knowing where he was going. This is important, because it was not a glowing description of Canaan which sent him there, but the fact that he believed what God said.

9. **As though he were a foreigner.** He lived in tents, rather than building a city. This fact, along with Isaac and Jacob, is cited as proof that he understood God's promise to involve more than just an earthly *promised-land!*

10. **Was waiting for the city.** Abraham and the Patriarchs understood that their real blessing was their relationship with God, and that their earthly wealth was not very important (although it did come from God). We do not know how much Abraham knew of God's plans, but the point is: He believed God!!! [Compare *1 Cor. 2:6-10; Heb. 11:39-40.*]



<sup>11</sup>It was faith that made Abraham able to become a father even though he was too old and Sarah herself was unable to have children. He trusted God to keep his promise. <sup>12</sup>Though he was practically dead, from this one man there came as many descendants as there are stars in the sky, as many as the numberless grains of sand on the seashore.

<sup>13</sup>It was in faith that all these persons died. They did not receive the things God had promised, but from a long way off they saw and welcomed them, and admitted openly that they were foreigners and refugees on earth. <sup>14</sup>Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup>They did not think back to the country they had left; if they had, they would have had the chance to return. <sup>16</sup>Instead, it was a better country they longed for, the heavenly country. And so God is not ashamed to have them call him their God, because he has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand of the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

11. **Able to become a father.** Abraham was one hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety. Sarah laughed when she heard the promise [Isaac means laughter]. But both Abraham and Sarah believed God could do what he promised! [Both the TEV and NIV follow the oldest and best Greek text in this verse.]

12. **Though he was practically dead.** A man who had reached his age without a son, could not reasonably expect to have one! The birth of Isaac was a supernatural event! **From this one man.** God kept his promise to Abraham! Compare *Gen. 15:5; 22:17*. [Abraham had other children before this, by slave women who were auxiliary wives. But only Isaac was the son of promise.]

13. **It was in faith.** The Patriarchs all died as *foreigners* in Canaan, without seeing their descendants become as many as the stars in the sky. But they died still believing that God would do what he promised to do!!!

14. **Those who say such things.** They said they were foreigners and refugees. This proves they did not think Canaan was the complete fulfillment of God's promise, and that they were still looking for something else.

15. **They did not think back.** The fact that they did not return to their country of origin (Chaldea) showed that they had renounced all to follow God! Compare *Gen. 24:5-8; Acts 7:5*.

16. **The heavenly country.** Their faith pointed them to this heavenly country! See *Phil. 3:20*. **And so God is not ashamed.** He might have been ashamed, if he failed to fulfill the promise. This proves the earthly Canaan was not the true land of promise! [This is also an example of what Christ said to the Sadducees (*Matt. 22:31*).]

<sup>17</sup>It was faith that made Abraham offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, when God put Abraham to the test. Abraham was the one to whom God had made the promise, yet he was ready to offer his only son as a sacrifice. <sup>18</sup>God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that you will have descendants." <sup>19</sup>Abraham reckoned that God was able to raise Isaac back from death—and, so to speak, Abraham did receive Isaac back from death.

<sup>20</sup>It was faith that made Isaac promise blessings for the future to Jacob and Esau.

<sup>21</sup>It was faith that made Jacob bless each of the sons of Joseph just before he died; he leaned on the top of his walking stick and worshiped God.

<sup>22</sup>It was faith that made Joseph, when he was about to die, speak of the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and leave instructions about what should be done with his body.

<sup>23</sup>It was faith that made the parents of Moses hide him for three months after he was born. They saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's order.

By faith Abraham, when 17 God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though 18 God had said to him, "Through Isaac shall your promised offspring come." Abraham reasoned that God 19 could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

By faith Isaac blessed 20 Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

By faith Jacob, when he 21 was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when his 22 end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

By faith Moses' parents 23 hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

17. **That made Abraham offer his son.** Note: (1) Isaac was the only child of his marriage to Sarah; (2) God's promise was to come through Isaac; (3) yet God made him sacrifice Isaac, to test him! [A last-minute substitute was provided by God (*Gen. 22:10-14*).] **His only son.** Abraham did have other sons, but Isaac was *unique!* Compare *Gen. 16:15-16; 25:1-2*. See note on *John 3:16*.

18. **It is through Isaac.** This was God's promise in *Gen. 21:12*. Isaac was the *sole link* with the future, when God commanded his sacrifice! But see also *Gal. 3:16, 29*.

19. **Abraham reckoned.** This shows how strong his faith was in what God had promised him!!! **Back from death.** Even though God provided a last-minute substitute, in Abraham's mind, Isaac had died and been brought back to life. We see in this a *picture of Christ on the cross*.

20. **That made Isaac promise.** In blessing his two sons, Isaac was inspired by God to predict the future of both them and their descendants. See *Rom. 9:10-13* and notes.

21. **That made Jacob bless.** Again we see the inspiration of God, as Jacob included Joseph's two sons as heads of tribes. **He leaned.** That sick old man raised from his bed and stood, leaning on the top of his walking stick and worshipped God! This shows his faith!

22. **That made Joseph.** He made them promise to take his body into Canaan after his death. See *Gen. 50:24-26; Josh. 24:32*. This showed how sure he was that God would keep His promise.

23. **The parents of Moses.** Amram and his wife Jochebed. *Josephus* says: "God appeared to Amram in a dream, and promised him a son, who was to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage; and that Amram told this dream to his wife, and that they were led by it to hide their son." See *Acts 7:19-22*.

<sup>24</sup>It was faith that made Moses, when he was grown, refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup>He preferred to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy sin for a little while. <sup>26</sup>He reckoned that to suffer scorn for the Messiah was worth far more than all the treasures of Egypt; because he kept his eyes on the future reward.

<sup>27</sup>It was faith that made Moses leave Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger; he would not turn back, as though he saw the invisible God. <sup>28</sup>It was faith that made him establish the Passover and order the blood sprinkled on the doors, so that the Angel of Death would not kill the firstborn sons of the Israelites.

<sup>29</sup>It was faith that enabled the Israelites to cross the Red Sea as if on dry land; when the Egyptians tried to do it, the water swallowed them up.

<sup>30</sup>It was faith that made the walls of Jericho fall down, after the Israelites had marched around them for seven days. <sup>31</sup>It was faith that kept the harlot Rahab from being killed with those who disobeyed God, because she gave the spies a friendly welcome.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

**24. That made Moses.** He had been taught God's promises, and he believed them! See *Acts 7:23-29*.

**25. He preferred.** As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, the wealth and pleasure of the palace was his. The Jewish people were slaves and had nothing. But faith made him choose!

**26. For the Messiah.** From the time of *Gen. 3:15* onward, the message was: *Someone is coming!* Certainly no one before the time of the Cross really knew what God was going to do (*1 Cor. 2:6-10*), yet they knew a Messiah would come. See *Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22-23*.

**27. That made Moses leave Egypt.** The Exodus was one of the wonders of all time! There were 603,550 men of fighting age among the Israelites in the Exodus (*Num. 1:45-46*). Try to imagine the courage it took to do something like this!!!

**28. The Passover.** See *Exod. 12:3-30*. This was a picture of Christ, who is called "our Passover lamb" (*1 Cor. 5:7*).

**29. To cross the Red Sea.** [The NIV has "Sea of Reeds" in a footnote.] Perhaps two million Israelites took part in the crossing! It took faith for all involved to do this!!! See *Exod. 14:13-22; 1 Cor. 10:1-2*.

**30. The walls of Jericho.** *Joshua 6:8-21*. Archeology has verified that the walls fell outward!

**31. The harlot Rahab.** She acted on her belief that God had given Canaan to the Israelites! See *Joshua 2:1-22; Matt. 1:3-5* and notes.

<sup>32</sup>Should I go on? There isn't enough time for me to speak of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. <sup>33</sup>Through faith they fought whole countries and won. They did what was right and received what God had promised. They shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup>put out fierce fires, escaped being killed by the sword. They were weak but became strong; they were mighty in battle and defeated the armies of foreigners. <sup>35</sup>Through faith women received their dead raised back to life.

Others, refusing to accept freedom, died under torture in order to be raised to a better life. <sup>36</sup>Some were mocked and whipped, and others were tied up and put in prison. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went around clothed in skins of sheep or goats, poor, persecuted, and mistreated. <sup>38</sup>The world was not good enough for them! They wandered like refugees in the deserts and hills, living in caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup>What a record all of these have won by their faith! Yet they did not receive what God had

And what more shall I 32 say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who by 33 faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the 34 flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received 35 back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some 36 faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were 37 sawn in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the 38 world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

These were all commend- 39 ed for their faith, yet none of them received what had been

32. **Should I go on?** The Old Testament is full of such examples of faith in action! **Gideon.** *Judges 6:11.* **Barak.** *Judges 4:6.* **Samson.** *Judges 13:24.* **Jephthah.** *Judges 11:1.* **David.** *1 Sam. 16:1.* **Samuel.** *1 Sam. 1:20.* **And the prophets** such as Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, and the rest.

33. **Through faith.** This is the *common denominator* of all these heroes! **Fought whole countries,** as did Joshua. **Did what was right,** as did the Judges of Israel. **Shut the mouths of lions,** as did Daniel.

34. **Put out fierce fires.** *Dan. 3:17.* **Escaped being killed.** *Exod. 18:4.* **Weak but became strong.** *Isa. 38:5.* **Defeated the armies.** Gideon, Jonathan, etc.

35. **Women received their dead.** *1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37.* **Died under torture.** This was especially true of the terrible persecutions of the Jews mentioned in the Books of Maccabbes (which were part of the Septuagint). They suffered in hope of eternal life!

36. **Some.** This was true of many persecutions recorded in Jewish history. Compare *Jer. 20:7-18.*

37. **They were stoned.** *Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:21).* **Sawn in two.** Jewish tradition says this is how Isaiah was killed. See also *1 Sam. 22:18; 1 Kings 19:10.* These were all things very familiar to the Jews.

38. **The world.** The world shows it isn't worthy of them, by rejecting them! Compare *Acts 22:22.* **They wandered.** *1 Kings 18:4; 1 Sam. 24:3;* and many more examples are given in the Books of Maccabees.

39. **What a record!** This shows the power of the faith in their lives!!! **Yet they did not receive.** They did not receive the promised heavenly country in their lifetimes on earth! Nor did they see God's Messiah! But they lived and died in faith - believing that God would keep His promise!!!

promised, <sup>40</sup>because God had decided on an even better plan for us. His purpose was that they would be made perfect only with us.

### God Our Father

**12** As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. Let us rid ourselves, then, of everything that gets in the way, and the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. <sup>2</sup>Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and is now seated at the right side of God's throne.

<sup>3</sup>Think of what he went through, how he put up with so much hatred from sinful men! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up. <sup>4</sup>For in your struggle against sin you have not yet had to fight to the point of being killed.

promised. God had planned <sup>40</sup> something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

### God Disciplines His Sons

**12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let <sup>2</sup> us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him <sup>3</sup> who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

In your struggle against <sup>4</sup> sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your

40. **Because.** God's promise has not failed!!! He had something better, which they could not even imagine (1 Cor. 2:9). **His purpose.** That they and we might be made complete in the New Jerusalem!!! The whole spiritual family of Abraham, raised from death, will go into that heavenly world in one group at one time, after the Judgment!!! See *Luke 16:19-31* and notes. See also *Rev. 21:1-4* and notes.

1. **As for us.** All these examples of faith in chapter 11 are a large crowd of witnesses! **Let us rid ourselves.** The symbolism is from the Games. Runners practiced with weights on their feet. For the race, these are removed. To win the Christian race, we must get rid of worldly hopes and fears, obligations and friendships, and anything else that would *slow us down* in our race. See *2 Cor. 6:14* and note. **And the sin.** This also is from the symbolism of the Games. Sin (in general) is like the long flowing robes that would tangle in the legs of the runner and trip him up. No one would think of running with such a robe on them! No one should allow sin to trip them up! **With determination.** If you do not want to win, you probably won't! You must *stick with it!!!*

2. **Our eyes fixed on Jesus.** His example is much greater than any or all of the others!!! **On whom our faith depends.** He is both the *source* and the *Pioneer!* He has *broken trail* for us by going on ahead of us. See *Col. 1:18*. **Because of the joy.** The joy of being the Pioneer who destroys the power of the Devil and brings many sons and daughters to God by setting them free from sin and death!!! **The disgrace.** *Gal. 3:13*. **Seated.** *Heb. 8:1; 10:12*.

3: **Think.** If you feel discouraged, think about what he went through!!!

4. **For in your struggle.** "You have not been asked to do what Christ did!!!"

<sup>5</sup>Have you forgotten the encouraging words which God speaks to you as his sons?

"My son, pay attention when the Lord punishes you, and do not be discouraged when he rebukes you.

<sup>6</sup>Because the Lord punishes everyone he loves, and chastises everyone he accepts as a son."

<sup>7</sup>Endure what you suffer as being a father's punishment; because your suffering shows that God is treating you as his sons. Was there ever a son who was not punished by his father? <sup>8</sup>If you are not punished as all his sons are, it means you are not real sons, but bastards. <sup>9</sup>In the case of our human fathers, they punished us and we respected them. How much more, then, should we submit to our spiritual Father and live! <sup>10</sup>Our human fathers punished us for a short time, as it seemed right to them. But God does it for our own good, so that we may share his holiness.

blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

5. **Have you forgotten?** "You know, if you will remember, that sufferings are evidences of God's love for you!" The quotation is *Prov. 3:11-12* Septuagint. **When the Lord.** "Do not think it just as accidental act of blind fate (as the Gentiles do)." **Discouraged.** "This is not God's wrath for your sin! See what Jesus said in *Luke 13:1-5*."

6. **Because.** "Instead of being expressions of his anger, punishments (chastisements) are proof of his love!" **Punishes.** *MacKnight* says: "This scripture, by showing God's Providence to be just and righteous, dispels the gloom which the misery and suffering which are part of life, may bring on us. We are here being trained and developed, by God who is our teacher. He uses the problems and suffering of life to teach us the good qualities and the character to serve him in this world, and to enjoy the pleasures of the next. May every suffering child of God understand this and believe it!" **Chastises.** "As a father spans his children, because he loves them!" See *Prov. 3:11-13*.

7. **Endure what you suffer.** "This is an expression of your Father's love!" **That God is treating you.** "He is giving you his blessing by causing you to grow spiritually!" **Who was not punished** by his father, who wanted to correct his faults and develop his character?

8. **If you are not.** "The fathers of bastards have no concern about the health, welfare, and education of them."

9. **In the case of.** "They punished us for our faults and we respected them." **How much more.** "Our spiritual Father uses more love and gentleness than our human fathers, and he will not give us more than we can bear (*1 Cor. 10:13*)."

10. **But God does it.** "We must be holy to live with him in Eternity!"

<sup>11</sup>When we are punished, it seems to us at the time something to make us sad, not glad. Later, however, those who have been disciplined by such punishment reap the peaceful reward of a righteous life.

### Instructions and Warnings

<sup>12</sup>Lift up your limp hands, then, and strengthen your weak knees! <sup>13</sup>Keep walking on straight paths, so that the lame foot may not be disabled, but instead be healed.

<sup>14</sup>Try to be at peace with all men, and try to live a holy life, because no one will see the Lord without it. <sup>15</sup>Be careful that no one turns back from the grace of God. Be careful that no one becomes like a bitter plant that grows up and troubles many with its poison. <sup>16</sup>Be careful that no one becomes immoral or unspiritual like Esau, who for a single meal sold his rights as the

No discipline seems pleasant 11 at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, strengthen your 12 feeble arms and weak knees! Make level paths for your 13 feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

### Warning Against Refusing God

Make every effort to live 14 in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to 15 it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See 16 that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as

11. **At the time.** "It makes us sad, because of the pain it brings." **Later, however.** "Those who have been disciplined, trained, matured, prepared by such punishment reap the peaceful reward!" Compare *Psalm 119:67,71,75; Job 42:2-3; Rom. 8:28,37.* [For many years I have used the expression: *God spans his children.* This is certainly the idea in these verses. But it is not wrath!!! I imagine God saying something like this: "I love you! Everything I have is yours! I have amazing mercy! I am not angry with you. When I spank you, it is because I love you! I want you to grow spiritually! I want you to be strong and healthy! I am giving you blessings in each spanking, so that you will be a blessing to others! The whole world is programmed learning for you, because I want you to live with me forever! Open yourself to me and let me come in and heal you and forgive you. See, I am running to meet you! Listen! I stand at the door and knock! Open yourself to me! I love you! I love you!" See *Luke 15:11-32* and notes.]

12-13. **Lift up your limp hands.** "Push ahead with all your strength!" Compare *Job 4:1-6.*

14. **Try to be at peace.** "You must make an effort to be at peace with the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and even with your enemies!" **Try to live a holy life.** "You must make a positive effort to live pure and holy, so that you will be acceptable to God!" These people were contentious, and when one sinned through weakness, they would bring anger and belligerence against him in an unholy way. In doing this they would destroy themselves as well. See what Paul says in *Gal. 6:1-2.*

15. **That no one turns back.** The symbolism is a sheep who strays from the flock and has to be brought back. Christians are to work together to keep each other "headed in the right direction." **Like a bitter plant.** This refers to one of their fellow Christians who might poison the group with such things as sin, false teaching, and bitterness.

16. **Like Esau.** He is a *bad example* of the *bitter plant*. He thought so little of his rights as the older son, that he literally gave them away for a single meal. Immorality is always a danger, and many, like Esau, will be tempted to give away their future for a moment's pleasure.

older son. <sup>17</sup>Afterward, you know, he wanted to receive his father's blessing; but he was turned back, because he could not find a way to change what he had done, even though he looked for it with tears.

<sup>18</sup>You have not come, as the people of Israel came, to what you can feel, to Mount Sinai with its blazing fire, the darkness and the gloom, the storm, <sup>19</sup>the noise of a trumpet, and the sound of a voice. When the people heard the voice they begged not to have to hear another word, <sup>20</sup>because they could not bear the order which said, "If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned to death." <sup>21</sup>The sight was so terrible that Moses said, "I am trembling and afraid!"

<sup>22</sup>Instead, you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its thousands of angels. <sup>23</sup>You have come to the joyful gathering of God's oldest sons, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, who is the judge of all men, and to

as the oldest son. Afterward, <sup>17</sup>as you know, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

You have not come to a <sup>18</sup>mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or <sup>19</sup>to such a voice speaking words, that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

But you have come to <sup>22</sup>Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first-<sup>23</sup>born, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of right-

17. **Afterward, you know.** We can never *un-do* an act! Esau could not change what he had done, nor could his father remove the blessing which he had already given Jacob. Compare *Rev. 22:11* and notes.

18. **You have not come.** "So that you will understand why you must not throw away your rights as Abraham's descendants (*Gal. 3:18*), I want you to see the difference between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion." The point is to show that the blessings and obligations of the New Covenant are much better than those of the Old. Compare *Exod. 19*.

19. **When the people heard.** This shows the terrifying character of the revelation on which the Age of Moses was based. See *Exod. 20:18-19*.

20. **Because.** This command added to their terror!

21. **That Moses said.** *Deut. 9:19*. Even Moses himself was terrified by all this!!! The comparison makes us think of Elijah (*1 Kings 19:11-12*).

22. **To Mount Zion.** Zion is the symbol of the *kingdom of heaven*. See *Psalms 2:6; Joel 2:32; Isa. 1:27*. **The heavenly Jerusalem.** See *Rev. 21:2-3* and notes. **Angels.** Angels were part of the terror at Sinai. Here they are part of joy and praise! Compare *Heb. 1:14; Rev. 5:11-12*.

23. **Of God's oldest sons.** [The NIV adopts the general view of Theophylact, while the TEV follows Alford, Delitzsch, et. al.] ΠΡΩΤΟΤΟΚΟΝ is plural = *oldest sons*. Among the Jews, the oldest son got the largest share of the inheritance. In Christ's church, every man (and woman) is an "oldest son!" Their names are not written in "birth records" as the Jews wrote every name, but in heaven on the *Lamb's book of the living* (*Rev. 3:5; 13:8* and notes). The terror of Sinai stands in sharp contrast to the joy of Zion!!! Compare *Rev. 7:9-12* and notes. **Made perfect.** See *Heb. 11:39-40*.



the spirits of righteous men made perfect. <sup>24</sup>You have come to Jesus, who arranged the new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that tells of much better things than Abel's blood.

<sup>25</sup>Be careful, then, and do not refuse to hear him who speaks. Those who refused to hear him who gave the divine message on earth did not escape. How much less shall we escape, then, if we turn away from him who speaks from heaven! <sup>26</sup>His voice shook the earth at that time, but now he has promised, "I will once more shake not only the earth but heaven as well."

<sup>27</sup>The words "once more" plainly show that the created things will be shaken and removed, so that the things that are not shaken will remain.

<sup>28</sup>Let us be thankful, then, because we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Let us be grateful and worship God in a way that will please him, with reverence and fear; <sup>29</sup>because our God is indeed a destroying fire.

eous men made perfect, to <sup>24</sup> Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not <sup>25</sup> refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his <sup>26</sup> voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The words "once <sup>27</sup> more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are <sup>28</sup> receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is <sup>29</sup> a consuming fire.

**24. You have come to Jesus, rather than to Moses. Who arranged.** By his death (*Heb. 9:15-17*). **To the sprinkled blood.** See notes on *Heb. 9:5, 13*. **Than Abel's blood.** His blood called for revenge (*Gen. 4:10*); Christ's blood pleads mercy for us!!!

**25. Do not refuse to hear.** See *verse 19; Heb. 3:16-19*. **If we turn away** by refusing to hear God's own Son!!!

**26. His voice.** See *verses 18-19*. Compare *Exod. 19:18*. **But now.** The quotation is *Haggai 2:6*. Many apply this to the Second Coming, but I think *MacKnight* is right in understanding *the earth* to be pagan idolatry, etc., and *heaven* to be the Mosaic worship and the Jewish state. See *Matt. 24:29-31* and note.

**27. Once more.** *MacKnight* says: "That the Jewish worship, and the heathen idolatry, and the powers which supported these forms of worship, are the things foretold here to be shaken, and that they are to be removed, is evident from God himself, who thus explains the shaking of the heavens and the earth (*Haggai 2:21-22*)." **Will remain.** *MacKnight* says: "For as it implies, that God would make but one alteration more in the religious worship of the world, it certainly follows, that the form to be substituted in place of the things to be shaken and removed, shall be permanent. The gospel therefore will remain to the end of the world, as the only form of religion acceptable to God."

**28. Because we receive a kingdom.** This is the language of *Dan. 7:18*. Christ's church = the Kingdom of heaven = the Kingdom of God. See notes on *Matt. 16:18-19; 19:28; 26:64; Luke 12:32; 22:69; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6*. **In a way.** See *Heb. 9:14*.

**29. Because our God.** *Deut. 4:24*. Love must be our motivation, not fear of punishment (*1 John 4:18*). But all who refuse to worship God in a way that pleases Him, have reason to be afraid. This must be balanced against fear of persecution. But Christ is the EVIDENCE that God loves us (*John 3:16*)!!!

**How to Please God**

**13** Keep on loving one another as brothers in Christ. <sup>2</sup>Remember to welcome strangers in your homes. There were some who did it and welcomed angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup>Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them. Remember those who are suffering, as though you were suffering as they are.

<sup>4</sup>Marriage should be honored by all, and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. God will judge those who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

<sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you." <sup>6</sup>Let us be bold, then, and say,

"The Lord is my helper,  
I will not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?"

**Concluding Exhortations**

**13** Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

"Never will I leave you;  
never will forsake you."  
So we say with confidence,  
"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?"

1. **Keep on loving.** They had loved each other (*Heb. 6:10*), but in the general decay of faith, they were losing this (*Heb. 10:24-25; Matt. 24:12; Rev. 2:4-5*). Their love must make them one in Christ, and break down the walls between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free men, men and women, etc. *Reuel Lemmons* says that without the mortar of love to hold us together, the church becomes just a pile of jagged rocks! (*Eph. 2:20-22*)

2. **To welcome strangers.** Persecution often made Christians homeless. It was important to be able to depend upon your fellow Christians! See note on *1 Tim. 3:2*. **And welcomed angels.** See *Gen. 18:1; Matt. 25:35*.

3. **In prison.** See note on *Heb. 10:34*. **Suffering.** See notes on *Heb. 10:33; 1 Cor. 12:26*. There was great danger that they would conceal their Christianity, disown their teachers and fellow Christians, and resent the disgrace and persecution which following Christ brought on them. For this reason, Christian love (treating others as God treats you through Christ) is **VITAL**, because all these other good qualities grow out of it!!!

4. **Marriage.** "Marriage is an honest thing, decreed by God, and should be honored by all people." *MacKnight* thinks this is pointed toward the Jewish Essenes, who generally viewed marriage as *vulgar*, and practiced celibacy. Compare *1 Tim. 4:3* and note. **Immoral.** See note on *Matt. 19:9* (immoral = unfaithful = fornication). **Adultery** is included in *immorality*, and specifically points to breaking marriage vows.

5. **From the love of money.** The *love* of money is a source of sin. See *1 Tim. 6:10; Eph. 5:5* and notes. The quotation is from *Deut. 31:6*; and other places. Read what Jesus said in *John 14:18*.

6. **Let us be bold.** "When you are persecuted, be bold, and say with the Psalmist (*Psalms 118:6* Septuagint), "The Lord is my helper." " **What can man?** Read Jesus's words in *Matt. 10:28*.

<sup>7</sup>Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you. Think back on how they lived and died, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. <sup>9</sup>Do not let all kinds of strange teachings lead you from the right way. It is good for our souls to be made strong by God's grace, not by obeying rules about foods; those who obey these rules have not been helped by them.

<sup>10</sup>The priests who serve in the Jewish tent have no right to eat of the sacrifice on our altar. <sup>11</sup>The Jewish High Priest brings the blood of the animals into the Most Holy Place to offer it as a sacrifice for sins; but the bodies of the animals are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup>For this reason Jesus also died outside the city gate, in order to cleanse the people from sin with his own blood.

<sup>13</sup>Let us, then, go to him outside the camp and

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.

The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make his people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

7. **Remember your former leaders.** James the brother of John, and James the Lord's brother, were both dead at this time. They had been closely connected with the Jerusalem church. There would be many others unknown to us. They were *good examples* to imitate!!!

8. **Jesus Christ.** The *former leaders* looked to Jesus as their Pioneer! He will always be the same powerful, gracious, faithful, and loving Savior!!! See *Heb. 1:12*.

9. **Do not let.** "Unauthorized teachers will tell you strange things about food, marriage, holy days, the sacrifices of the Law, etc. But don't be fooled into turning away from the *right way!*" Compare *1 Tim. 4:1-4; Col. 2:20-23. By God's grace.* Grace is contrasted with the *strange teachings*. The one excluded the other! See *Gal. 3:1-5*.

10. **Have no right to eat.** *MacKnight* says: "The sacrifice belonging to those who believe, is the sacrifice of himself, which Christ offered to God in heaven for the sins of the world: and the *eating* of that sacrifice does not mean the *literal eating* of it, but the partaking of the pardon which Christ has procured for sinners by that sacrifice." See notes on *John 6:53-56*. The Jewish priests did eat the sacrifice of their altar in the Jewish tent (*Heb. 9:8-10*). The point is that Christians are not to be seduced away from Christ by animal sacrifices.

11. **Burned outside the camp.** The blood was taken into the Most Holy Place and offered as a sacrifice for sin. But the bodies of the SIN OFFERINGS were not eaten at all, since the curse of sin was on them. This is cited as proof that the priests who serve in the Jewish tent have no right to share the Christian's sin offering!

12. **For this reason.** All these sin offerings were symbolic of Jesus THE SIN OFFERING!!! **Outside the city gate** = outside the camp. This was because he shared our sin (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

13. **Go to him.** "Be bold to give up your old associations, even though you will be branded as a traitor and a sinner, and your privileges as a Jew will be taken away (*Matt. 10:17*). But this cost is not too high when you measure it against what the Lord gives you!!!"

share his shame. <sup>14</sup>For there is no permanent city for us here on earth; we are looking for the city which is to come. <sup>15</sup>Let us, then, always offer praise to God as our sacrifice through Jesus, which is the offering presented by lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup>Do not forget to do good and to help one another, because these are the sacrifices that please God.

<sup>17</sup>Obey your leaders and follow their orders. They watch over your souls without resting, since they must give an account of their service to God. If you obey them, they will do their work gladly; else they will do it with sadness, and that would not be of any help to you.

<sup>18</sup>Keep on praying for us. We are sure we have a clear conscience, because we want to do the right thing at all times. <sup>19</sup>And I beg you all the more to pray that God will send me back to you the sooner.

### Prayer

<sup>20</sup>God has raised from the dead our Lord Jesus who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep because of his death, by which the eternal covenant is

For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Through Jesus therefore, <sup>15</sup> let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget <sup>16</sup> to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Obey your leaders and <sup>17</sup> submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Pray for us. We are sure <sup>18</sup> that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. I <sup>19</sup> particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

May the God of peace, <sup>20</sup> who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of

14. **No permanent city.** "We are strangers and foreigners here (*Phil. 3:20*)." In less than nine years, Jerusalem was demolished!!!

15. **Praise . . . through Jesus.** "We need no bloody sacrifices. The praise from our lips is our offering to God, through Jesus Christ! Our God wants a *living sacrifice* (*Rom. 12:1-2*)."

16. **Do not forget.** This also is part of praising God. See *Phil. 4:18*; *James 1:27* and notes.

17. **Obey your leaders.** Church leaders (see note on *Eph. 4:11*). In each congregation, the Church leader/elders were spiritual guards over the souls of the members. They must account to God for their work. **If you obey them.** "For your own good you should make the work of your leaders easy and joyful, for otherwise it will do you no good. Your unwillingness to hear them means that you are out of sympathy with their teaching and that will end in your condemnation."

18. **Keep on praying for us.** Paul (if he is the author) always asks for the prayers of the Christians! **A clear conscience.** "Even though you may not like my teaching in this letter, yet it is the truth which I received from God." *Johnson* thinks this is also said because Paul was arrested as a criminal in Jerusalem (*Acts 21:28*).

19. **And I beg.** He wants to be released from prison, so he can be with them in person, and help them.

20. **God has raised.** He is the God of peace! He has made peace through the death and resurrection of his Son!!! **The Great Shepherd.** See *Ezek. 34:23*; *John 10:11*. It was as the Great Shepherd that Christ gave his life for the sheep!!! **The eternal covenant** is here viewed in its start from the grave. Blood = death. Compare *Matt. 20:28*; *Mark 10:45*; *Heb. 2:9-17*; *Gal. 3:13*; *2 Cor. 5:14-21*.

sealed. <sup>21</sup>May the God of peace provide you with every good thing you need in order to do his will, and may he, through Jesus Christ, do in us what pleases him. And to Christ be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

### Final Words

<sup>22</sup>I beg you, my brothers, to listen patiently to this message of encouragement; for this letter I have written you is not very long. <sup>23</sup>I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been let out of prison. If he comes soon enough, I will have him with me when I see you.

<sup>24</sup>Give our greetings to all your leaders and to all God's people. The brothers from Italy send you their greetings.

<sup>25</sup>May God's grace be with you all.

the sheep, equip you with 21 everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Brothers, I urge you to 22 bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written you only a short letter.

I want you to know that 23 our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

Greet all your leaders and 24 all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

Grace be with you all. 25

21. **May the God of peace.** He is the source of everything we need to do his will! See *Phil. 2:12-13*. This doxology of praise is addressed to the God of peace, through our Lord Jesus. It is through Jesus, now reigning as Messiah, that all grace is given to God's people.

22. **To listen patiently.** "I am afraid you may be prejudiced against me, and I want you to listen patiently to the brief letter I have written to you on such important issues."

23. **Timothy.** We have no information about Timothy being in prison. The fact that the writer mentions him, implies that these Jewish Christians were not members of the *circumcision party*, or at least not hostile to Paul and his associate Timothy.

24. **Give our greetings** to your leaders and all God's people in Judea. **The brothers from Italy.** This shows he writes from Rome. This would agree with Paul's authorship.

25. **God's grace.** This is the usual closing word. God's grace was constantly on the mind of the Christians!!