

HEBREWS

Author :

Unknown. Some scholars believe that the apostle Paul wrote this letter. Some have suggested others as the possible author – Apollos, Silas, Barnabas, etc. The author does not make himself known in the letter, and the Bible does not inform us who he was in any other place, so we conclude that we cannot now know and do not need to know who wrote it. It is enough to know that it was written by divine inspiration and that God caused it to be included among the books of the Bible.

Date :

Sometime shortly before 70 AD when the Roman army came to Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the temple and exiled all the remaining Jews.

Themes :

The greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the greatness of the New Covenant which He made. The writer shows clearly that in every way the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant God made with Israel through Moses. Some Jewish Christians, being persecuted because of their faith in Christ, were tempted to abandon the teachings about Christ they had received and to go back to the old ways. Therefore the writer not only shows the greatness of the New Covenant but also gives 5 very severe warnings to those who were possibly thinking of turning away from it. Another leading theme of this letter is announced in the first two verses and in 12:25: God has spoken, not merely through His prophets, but through His own Son, and everyone should listen and obey. Two of the key words in this letter are "better" (1:4; 7:19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16,35,40; 12:24) and "faith." The Bible's great chapter on faith is in this letter (chapter 11).

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1 God, who in time past, at various times and in diverse ways spoke to the fathers by the prophets, 2 in these last days has spoken to us by *his* Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds.

3 *The Son* is the brightness of *God's* glory, and

1:1 "God. . .spoke" – this is one of the great themes of this letter. What God spoke is recorded in the Old Testament. Compare Matt 4:4; 2 Pet 1:21; 2 Tim 3:16. See how the following verses in this letter are introduced: They reveal God speaking – 1:6,7,8,10; 2:11-13; 3:7; 4:3; 5:5,6; 6:13,14; 7:21; 8:8; 10:5,15-17; 12:25,26; 13:5.

"In diverse ways" – see Gen 15:1,12; 18:1,10; 28:12-15; Ex 3:1-4; 19:20; 25:22; 33:11; 34:5-7; Josh 5:13-15; 2 Sam 23:1-3; 1 Kings 19:11-13; Isa 6:1-8; Jer 1:4,9,10; Ezek 2:1,2; Dan 8:15-18; 9:20-22.

"The fathers" – ancestors of the Hebrews.

"Prophets" – those men whom God inspired and sent to speak His messages in the Old Testament. Notes at Gen 20:7; etc. Since it was the one true God who spoke through the prophets, obviously the study of the Old Testament is very important for an understanding of His will and ways.

1:2 Verses 1 and 2 give the first of several comparisons in Hebrews.

"His Son" – see John 7:16,17; 8:28; 12:49,50; 17:8. Jesus was the final great prophet spoken of in Deut 18:18,19. In vs 2-4 the writer of this letter says nine very important things about Jesus the Son of God.

"Heir" – the writer begins to show who the Son of God is and how much greater He is than the prophets. Heir means one who is to come into possession of what is willed to him.

"Made the worlds" – v 10; Gen 1:1; John 1:1-3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16. The Son was in existence before the universe was made – He did not become God's Son by being born on earth (John 17:5; Col 1:17). Note on "Son" at Matt 3:16,17; 11:27; John 3:16; 5:18-23.

1:3 "God's glory" here means the divine nature itself. God can be described as "light" (1 John 1:5). Christ is the shining forth of that light (compare Luke 1:78,79; 2:29-32; John 1:4,5,9; 8:12; 2 Cor 4:6). The radiance of the sun reveals the sun and is of the very nature of the sun. In the same way Christ reveals God and has the very nature of God – John 1:14,18; 10:30; 14:9; other references at Phil 2:6; Luke 2:11. Only one who shared God's nature could be the radiance of God's glory. He is "light of light."

"Exact image of His nature" – compare 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15. The Greek word translated "nature" means "substance", "essence", "actual being", "real nature." God in His eternal spiritual being dwells in "unapproachable light" and is invisible (1 Tim 6:16; John 1:18). He became visible in Christ. God's nature and attributes

the exact image of his nature, and upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had by himself purged our sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 being made so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they.

appear fully in Christ (Col 2:9). Christ reveals in His own person exactly what God is like. This too, could be said only of one who shared God's nature. See further references at Phil 2:6.

"By the word of his power" – compare Col 1:17. His Word speaks of His will – what He says is done. The universe with its galaxies, constellations, stars, sun, and planets holds together and is kept from collapsing by the power of Jesus Christ. By Him it moves forward to the purpose He has for it. In this too, we see that Christ shares the very nature of God. Who but God Himself could have a word and will so powerful as to uphold the whole universe?

"Purged our sins" – this means that Jesus, by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, provided the way for men to be cleansed from their sins (7:27; 9:26; Matt 26:28; 10:10; 1 John 1:7; John 1:29; Rev 1:5). He did this "by himself." No man had any contribution to make to this divine work.

"He sat down" – v 13; 2:9; 10:12; Ps 110:1; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; Rev 3:21. By His sacrifice on the cross, the work of providing cleansing from sin was finished, and Jesus sat down at the highest place of power and glory in the universe.

1:4 In showing Christ's superiority to the prophets (vs 1,2), the writer has shown His superiority to the angels as well. Note on angels at Gen 16:7.

"Being made" – the Greek word also means "having become." He was superior to the angels before He came to earth. But as a man on earth He was a "little lower than the angels" – 2:9. After His resurrection, He rose to a place higher than the angels.

"A more excellent name" – judging from the next verse this superior name is "Son." "Son" here means one who shares the nature of God and is to be worshiped, the Lord of the universe (vs 6,8,10). Compare Phil 2:9-11. Jesus, born into the world in a position lower than the angels, "inherited" this name which belonged to the Son of God before the universe came into existence.

It is possible that some of the "Hebrews" did not have a proper understanding of who Christ is. Some may have thought that Christ Himself was some sort of angel, or a person whom God created as He had the angels. This chapter shows the falsity of such views. But in showing the superiority of Christ over the angels the writer is certainly aiming at this great point: the superiority of the new covenant established by Christ over the old covenant of the Law. And the old covenant was given through angels – 2:2.

5 For to which of the angels did *God* ever say,
 You are my Son,
 this day have I begotten you.
 And again,
 I will be a Father to him,
 and he will be a Son to me.
 6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into
 the world, he says,
 And let all the angels of God worship him.
 7 He says of the angels,
 Who makes his angels spirits,
 and his ministers a flame of fire.
 8 But *he says* to the Son,
 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
 A sceptre of righteousness is the
 sceptre of your kingdom.
 9 You have loved righteousness,
 and hated wickedness,

therefore God, your God, has anointed
 you with the oil of gladness above
 your associates.
 10 And *he also says*,
 You, Lord, in the beginning
 have laid the foundation of the earth,
 and the heavens are the work of
 your hands.
 11 They will perish, but you remain.
 All of them will wear out like a cloak,
 12 And like a garment you will fold them up,
 and they will be changed.
 But you are *always* the same,
 and your years will not end.
 13 But to which of the angels did he ever say,
 Sit at my right hand until I make your
 enemies your footstool?
 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth
 to serve those who will be heirs of salvation?

1:5 See Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14. No angel can claim the title "God's Son" for himself (see note at John 3:16). In 2 Sam 7:14 God is speaking first of David's son Solomon. But He knew a greater than Solomon would come who would be the Son of David and the Son of God (Rom 1:3,4; Isa 9:6).

1:6 "Firstborn" - in Greek this term signifies the pre-eminent One. It would not be incorrect to call even God the Father the "Firstborn" - meaning the pre-eminent one in the universe. See note at Col 1:15. The word need not refer to a literal birth of any kind (see Ps 89:27 - "appoint him my first-born").

"Worship him" - these words appear in Deut 32:43 in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (Septuagint). Here the Holy Spirit puts His stamp of approval on these words. See also Ps 97:7. Because angels are to worship Christ it is clear that He is far above them. It is also clear that Christ shares the nature of God - otherwise God would not command angels to worship Him. In the Bible worship is to be for God alone (see Matt 4:10).

1:7,8 See Ps 104:4; Ps 45:6,7. These verses show that angels are beings God has created. The Son of God is not a created being but shares God's nature. In v 8 God the Father speaks to the Son and says through the prophet David - "Your throne, O God." Some who deny Christ's deity have tried to translate this "God is your throne." This is an absurd translation. It actually makes Christ greater than God - for greater is the One who sits on a throne than the throne itself. See other references to Christ's deity at Phil 2:6.

1:9 "Your God" - God the Father - Eph 1:3.
1:10-12 "And again" - see Ps 102:25-27. Here is another example of God speaking through a prophet. And He speaks of Christ

the Son of God (v 8) as "Lord" and says in v 10 that Christ created the heavens and earth. This is further proof that Christ shares God's nature, for God alone is the Creator (Gen 1:1). In vs 11,12 God says that the Son is unchangeable and eternal. These are attributes only God has. And who but God could ever fold up the heavens "like a garment" (v 12)? And Christ will do that. Also we should note that psalm 102 is a prayer to Jehovah God (102:1), but here the writer says it is a prayer to Christ. In other words, Christ is the incarnation of Jehovah. See other references at Luke 2:11.

1:13 See Ps 110:1. Only to Christ His Son has God given the highest place in the universe.

1:14 Christ is the Lord of men (v 10; Rom 14:9; Phil 2:9-11). But the angels are sent to serve those who will inherit salvation, those who are believers in Christ. "Salvation" here means the final step in their salvation - Rom 8:23,29,30; 1 Pet 1:5. We are not told here what service angels perform for us. Notes on angels at Gen 16:7. With these words the writer has finished his first main point - God has spoken through His own Son who shares His nature and who is far greater than all men and all angels. We may be sure that God's revelation through His Son is His final revelation. After sending His own Son and speaking through Him, why should He go back to His former method and choose a prophet from among men to speak through?

2:1-4 This is the first of five very severe warnings in this letter. The others are 3:7-19; 6:1-8; 10:26-31; 12:25-29. The warnings are against treating the gospel lightly (2:3), unbelief (3:12,19), falling away (6:6), deliberately going on in sin (10:26), and refusing God and His revelation of truth (12:25). These five things can be summed

2 Therefore we ought to pay more careful attention to the things we have heard, lest at any time we drift away *from them*. **2** For if the word spoken by angels was firm, and every violation *of the Law* and *every* disobedience was justly paid back in full, **3** how will we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first was spoken by the Lord, and which was confirmed to us by those who heard *him*? **4** God also gave witness *with them*, both with signs and wonders, and with

up in one word – apostasy. Apostasy means to rebel against God and to turn away from the truth He has revealed.

2:1 “Therefore” – since God has spoken by His own Son who is incomparably great we must regard what He has said with exceptional care.

“What we have heard” – the gospel of Christ.

“Drift away” – from the truth God has given to us. Drifting is one of the easiest of things. It requires no effort, only a lack of effort. There are currents in the world that bear people away from Christ. To drift downstream on any such current is to head for disaster.

2:2 “Spoken by angels” – this “message” was the law that came through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus chapter 19, etc). Nothing was said of angels at that time, but the Jews believed that God used angels in the giving of the law. Gal 3:19 confirms this. See also Acts 7:53.

“Firm” – it was God’s law the angels spoke and He demanded obedience to it (Ex 19:5; Lev 18:1-5; Deut 6:1-3; 32:45-47), and punished disobedience (Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-68; 2 Kings 17:7-20).

2:3 “Salvation” – the salvation God has provided through Christ (Rom 1:16). The writer’s point is this: God’s revelation through His Son (the gospel, the new covenant) is greater than His revelation through angels (the law). Those who neglected God’s law did not escape; neither will they escape who neglect the gospel of Christ. The gospel is a revelation of God’s love and grace, and provides salvation for men. But this does not mean that those who hear the gospel and treat it lightly can escape punishment. Rather their punishment will be more certain and more terrible because that which they ignore is greater than any previous revelation.

This salvation is called “so great.” Christ’s gospel is exceedingly great in:

- Its Author – God Himself,
- Its certainty – many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3)
- Its uniqueness – there is one, and only one true gospel - John 14:6; Acts 4:12
- Its saving power – 7:25; Rom 1:16,
- Its revelation of love and grace – Rom 5:8
- Its satisfaction of justice – Rom 3:25,26,
- Its permanent results – 9:12; 10:10,14; Rom 5:9,10; etc.

many kinds of miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

5 For it is not to the angels that he has subjected the world to come, that we are speaking of. **6** But someone in a certain place testified and said,

What is man that you bring him to mind?
Or the son of man, that you visit him?

7 You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honour,

Observe that to face the just punishment of God, men do not have to vigorously reject the gospel. Ignoring or neglecting it is enough.

“Spoken by the Lord” – Jesus Himself was the first to proclaim the gospel (Mark 1:14,15; Luke 4:18-21). The writer says this to emphasize its great importance.

“Confirmed” – the apostles of Christ confirmed all that He taught.

“To us” – this may rule out Paul as the writer of this letter (see Gal 1:11,12,15-17; 2:6). At least, it is not the sort of statement we would expect Paul to use.

2:4 “God also” – the Father confirmed the gospel of His Son by mighty miracles – Matt 28:6 (Rom 1:4); Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43; 5:12-16; etc.

“And gifts” – the Holy Spirit giving spiritual abilities to believers was also a part of God’s witness to the gospel (1 Cor 12:7-11). The Trinity (see Matt 3:16,17) was at work to provide the gospel for people and to give absolutely sure evidence of its truthfulness.

2:5-18 The writer returns to the subject of chapter 1 – Christ is superior to the angels (vs 5,7,9). He knew that some people, lacking a full knowledge of the truth, might object: “If Christ is superior to the angels how is it that He was a man lower than the angels? How could one greater than angels experience temptation, suffering and death?” Christ’s death on the cross was a stumblingblock to many Jews – 1 Cor 1:23. And many would not receive the truth that He was God incarnate – John 5:17,18; 10:31-33.

The writer answers any possible objection by making two chief points in these verses: Christ was made lower than the angels only for a brief time (v 9), and it was both fitting and necessary that Christ should be made a man, lower than the angels, so that He could be the Saviour of men (vs 10,14,17).

2:5 “The world to come” – Matt 25:31,34; Acts 3:21; Rom 8:18-23; Isaiah chapter 11; Revelation chapters 20-22.

2:6-8 The writer quotes from Ps 8:4-6 to show that God will make men, not angels, the rulers of the world to come. See also Matt 19:28; 24:46,47; 25:21; Luke 19:17; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 5:10; 20:6; 22:5.

“But now” – v 8 has not yet been completely fulfilled. Man does not now have the high place that God intended him to have.

and placed him over the works of your hands.
 8 You have put all things in subjection
 under his feet.

For in putting all things in subjection under him, he omitted nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.
 9 But we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, he who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every man.

10 For it was fitting for him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both

2:9 Man's authority over the world to come will be realized only through the Lord Jesus. He is mankind's representative, "the last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45-47), the leader of a redeemed people who shall rule the world to come. He wanted to raise men far above the angels. So, though He was the Creator of angels, He was made lower than angels – that is, He became a man (John 1:14; Phil 2:5-8). The purpose of His incarnation was to suffer death.

"Taste death" here means actually to die. God's purpose is for man to rule the world to come. But there was a great obstacle to the fulfillment of this purpose. All men were sinners and subject to death as a punishment for their sins (Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12; 6:23). The Lord Jesus came to die "for every man" – 2 Cor 5:14,15; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 John 2:2. This was "by the grace of God." It was God's gift to mankind – John 3:16; Rom 5:8. Because Jesus willingly gave Himself up to death (John 10:17,18), God highly exalted Him – 1:3; Phil 2:9-11.

2:10 "Many sons to glory" – this is God's purpose in all that He has done and is doing among men. Compare John 17:22,24; Rom 5:2; 8:18,28-30; 9:23; 2 Cor 4:17; Eph 1:18.

"Author of their salvation" – the Lord Jesus – 12:2. He established the way they must go to reach the glory God has prepared for them. To make Him "perfect" does not mean that the nature of Jesus was not perfect before His sufferings. He was sinless and perfect in character and action. To make Him perfect here means that through suffering God perfectly fitted Him to be the Saviour of men – 5:7-9; 7:28. His sufferings not only took away their sin and guilt (7:27; 9:28; 13:12; 1 Pet 3:18), they made Him fully able to sympathize and help His people in their sufferings and temptations (v 18; 4:15,16).

2:11-18 The Lord Jesus completely identified Himself with those whom God is bringing to glory.

2:11 "He who sanctifies" – means "the one who makes people holy." The one who does this is Christ – 10:10,14; 13:12. Notes on holiness at Lev 20:7; John 17:17-19. Those who are made holy are those who believe in

he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified *are* all of one. For this reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying,

I will declare your name to my brothers,
 in the midst of the church I will sing
 praise to you.

13 And again,

I will put my trust in him.

And again,
 See, I and the children whom God has
 given me.

14 Since therefore the children had flesh and

Him and receive Him as Saviour from sin and Leader to glory. Christ has set them apart from the rest of mankind and consecrated them to God. He and they are "all of one." They belong to the same God. He is the Son of God born as a man. They become the children of God by a new spiritual birth – John 1:12,13; 3:3-8. God is the Father of Christ and the Father of all those who believe in Christ – John 20:17. And Christ, the Lord of glory, the heir of all things, is not ashamed to call believers "brothers" – though now they are poor, weak, and often foolish.

2:12,13 He quotes Ps 22:22 and Isa 8:17,18 as evidence that the Lord Jesus and His believers share together in human nature and in their relationship to God.

2:14,15 "Children" – the children of God, the "many sons" of v 10. They are all human beings, so Christ became a human being with real flesh and blood – Matt 1:20,21; Luke 2:5-7; 24:49; John 1:14; 6:53-58. His purpose in this was threefold: to die (Matt 16:21; 20:28; John 10:17,18), by dying to destroy Satan, and to free His people. Notes on the devil at Matt 4:1-10.

"The power of death" – he brought death into the world by leading Adam and Eve into sin – Genesis chapter 3. He rules in the realm of sin and death, taking men captive – 2 Tim 2:26, and keeping them in a state of spiritual death. He even has, it seems, the power to kill – Job 2:6; 1 Cor 5:5. By His death and resurrection Christ defeated Satan and made it possible for men to receive forgiveness of sins and spiritual life, and to be completely delivered from death – John 5:24; 11:25,26; 1 Cor 15:54-57; 2 Tim 1:10. This means the overthrow of Satan and the eventual destruction of him and his kingdom – John 12:31; Rev 20:10,14,15.

"Has the power" – the Greek verb is in the present tense. Even so, some versions have the translation "had the power" – as though Satan has it no longer. Satan still has the power of death over those who remain in their sins and reject Christ, but he has no such power over believers in Christ (except in a case like 1 Cor 5:5). Christ has rescued us from the power of Satan and the

blood, he also himself took of the same, so that through death he might destroy the one having the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver those who through fear of death were, throughout their lifetime, under the heel of slavery.

16 For he certainly does not take hold of angels *to help them*, but he takes hold of the children of Abraham.

17 Therefore in all things he had to be made like *his* brothers, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *relating* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since

kingdom of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of God (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13).

Observe that the "fear of death" is one way Satan holds men in slavery. Because of this fear men do all sorts of things at Satan's bidding that they might not otherwise do. The "fear of death" means more than merely being afraid to die – it is a fear of what happens after death. And this brings men into bondage to false religion. Men may do anything the devil tells them to do if they think that by doing it their lot will be better after death. Christ frees believers from the fear of death and all other bondage – John 8:32,36; Rom 6:18; 8:2,15,21; 2 Cor 5:6-8; Phil 1:21-23.

2:16 This verse is not easy to translate. All that is in the Greek is "For certainly he does not take hold of angels, but he takes hold of the children of Abraham." The KJV put the verb in the past tense and added the words "him the nature of" and "him" in italics, indicating that the words were not in Greek. The meaning of the Greek probably is that Christ, having become a man, now lays hold of certain men, not angels, to help them (v 18).

"Children of Abraham" – Christ became a man, and not an angel, in order to help men. Abraham's "children" are his literal descendants (Jews) who believe in Christ and his spiritual descendants who believe God as he did – Rom 4:11,12,16,17; Gal 3:7-9.

2:17 "In all things. . .like his brothers" – this does not mean that Jesus was a sinner or that He had a sinful nature like them. See 4:15; 7:26; Luke 1:35; John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22. And it does not mean that as a man He was no longer God – 1:6,8. It means that He had real flesh and blood, true human nature (v 14), and had to face real sufferings and temptations (v 18). There were two reasons for this – to make propitiation, and to become the high priest of his people. On atonement see Ex 29:33; 25:17; Rom 3:25,26.

"High priest" – the writer here introduces one of the great themes of this letter (3:1; 4:14; 5:10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11; 10:21). In the Bible a priest was one who offered sacrifices for the people, saw that the work of God's tabernacle or temple was carried on, and represented the people before God.

he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

3 Therefore, holy brethren, sharers in the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to him who appointed him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all his house. 3 For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, since he who has built the house has more honour than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but he who built all things *is* God. 5 And Moses as a servant *was* indeed faithful in all his house, as a

Note at Ex 28:1. The high priest was over all the priests and there was certain work that only he could do – 5:1-3; 9:7. See Leviticus chapter 16.

Now God has abolished the Old Testament priesthood (no other priesthood in any other religious system was ever ordained by God). Christ in heaven is the only high priest, and His believers on earth are the only priests on earth acceptable to God – 1 Pet 2:5,8; Rev 1:6. Christ is a merciful and faithful high priest – merciful to men, faithful to God in all His service.

"Propitiation" – many scholars think that this word brings out better the meaning of the Greek word than "reconciliation" or "atonement." See the meaning of it at Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2.

2:18 See 4:15; Matt 4:1-10. Jesus has felt the sharp arrows of temptation. He has suffered under the suggestions of Satan to think only of Himself, to avoid the cross, to do wrong. Since He has been through all that, He knows by experience Satan's ways and how they come against the human mind and heart, and He can sympathize with His people facing them. On temptation see also Matt 6:13; 1 Cor 10:13.

3:1-6 Christ is greater than Moses. Moses was a servant in God's house, but Jesus was God's Son over the house.

3:1 "Therefore" – this is God's way: He gives glorious truth then appeals to people to act according to it (Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 15:58; 2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5:1; Eph 4:1; Col 3:1).

"Holy" – 2:11.

"Heavenly calling" – the call to believers came from heaven and leads them to heaven (Rom 8:30).

"Apostle" – this is the only place in the Bible where Christ is called "apostle." It means God sent Him on His mission into the world and spoke through Him (1:2; John 6:38,39).

"High Priest" – 2:17.

3:2 Both Moses and Jesus were faithful – Num 12:7; John 8:28,29; 17:4.

"House" means the household of God, God's people.

3:3,4 Moses was a part of the household of God, but the Lord Jesus is the one who created it. So obviously Jesus is far superior to Moses.

3:5,6 The Son over the house is in a far

testimony to those things which were to be spoken afterwards, 6 but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

Today if you will hear his voice,

8 do not harden your hearts,
as in the provocation,

in the day of testing in the desert,

9 when your fathers tested me,
proved me,

and saw my works forty years.

superior position to a servant in the house. Moses spoke of things to be "spoken afterwards." That is, he pointed to a further revelation of truth from God (compare 10:1). Christ is the one of whom Moses testified - Luke 24:27; John 5:46. Why does the writer show Christ's superiority to Moses? Moses is the representative of the old covenant of law; Jesus is the founder of the new covenant of grace. The writer will later show that the new is far superior to the old (8:6-13). Here he shows the new is superior because of its Founder.

"Whose house we are" - Moses served among the people of Israel; Christ's household is made up of all believers in Him, and He is the Head of the house.

"If" - see v 14; Col 1:23; 1 Cor 15:2. This does not teach that believers who are members of His household may lose their faith and cease to be members. The meaning is that continuing to believe is the real evidence of membership. See v 14. It is useless to say of anyone who gives up his courage and hope, rejects the gospel, and goes back to live in sin that he ever possessed God's salvation (10:39; John 10:27; 1 John 2:19; etc). It is a sad fact that many boast that they are of the household of God when they are not.

3:7-19 These verses give the second warning against apostasy. Verses 7-11 are taken from Ps 95:7-11. See notes there. They show that a whole generation can profess to be the household of God and yet be guilty of unbelief and fail to receive the blessing God promised to give to those who believed (v 19). If it happened once it can happen more than once.

3:7 "The Holy Spirit says" - observe these words. A man wrote psalm 95, but God's Spirit inspired the writing and spoke through him. Compare 9:8; 1 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21.

"Today" - this word signifies a new beginning, a new day of opportunity. It means this era of Christ's gospel. Compare 2 Cor 6:1,2.

3:8 "Provocation" - Ex 17:1-7; Ps 95:8.

3:9 "Forty years" - Num 14:26-35.

3:10 "Grieved" - acting in a provoking way, hardening the heart and going astray - all that was (and is) a grief to God.

"Always go astray" - they were not like

10 Therefore I was grieved with that

generation, and said,

They always go astray in *their* heart,
and they have not known my ways.

11 So I swore in my wrath,

They will not enter my rest.

12 Watch, brethren, so that there may not be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But encourage each other daily, while it is called "today", lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become sharers with Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence firm to the end;

Christ's sheep (who obey His voice and follow Him - John 10:27). Outwardly they had the name of being God's people, inwardly they were hard, unbelieving and rebellious. Compare Ps 58:3; Isa 1:2,3; 53:6.

3:11 "My wrath" - see notes on God's anger at Num 25:3; etc.

"My rest" - rest from the desert journey and from their enemies in Canaan (Deut 1:34-36; 12:9; Josh 23:1).

3:12-19 The writer applies the words of Ps 95:7-11 to the situation among the Jews in his day. We may well apply it to the situation in the churches in our time. The warning is against unbelief among those who are called God's people.

3:12 "Watch" - 12:25; the dreadful possibility of unbelief is there; be very careful about it. An unbelieving heart is sinful. Sin produces unbelief which leads to further sin. An unbelieving heart cannot be seen but the outward evidence of it is turning away from the living God. Whenever men turn away from Him we know the cause is this - not their reason, their intellect, their learning, etc. It is the state of the heart that determines what men do. Compare Prov 4:23.

3:13 Christians should constantly encourage other Christians to really believe God and go on believing, and to avoid sin. This can be an instrument in God's hands for much good. Observe two facts about sin. It hardens men's hearts against God, and it is deceitful (2 Thess 2:10). Sin likes to present itself as something pleasant rather than the ugly thing God says it is. It tries to appear as honey rather than the poison it really is. It speaks of pleasures but is quiet about the wages it pays (Rom 6:23), and God's anger against it (Rom 1:18).

Sin is one of the three deceitful powers that make men blind and keep them in the broad way which leads to destruction. For the other two see Jer 17:9 and Rev 12:9. When the great deceiver Satan uses deceiving sin in man's deceitful heart, is there any limit to the possibilities of deception?

3:14 Verse 6. Observe carefully these verbs. We have become sharers in Christ (past tense - not "we will become sharers) if we hold our confidence in Him firm to the end (speaks of the future). If we have come to

15 while it is said,

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

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke *God*; however not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. 17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *Was it* not with those who had sinned, whose dead bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who refused to believe? 19 So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief.

4 Therefore let us fear that, perhaps, having received a promise of entering his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2 For the

share in Christ we have come to share in Christ – the future cannot abolish an actual event in the past. It can only confirm it. It can reveal whether we have really come to share in Christ or not. The writer is defining the true people of God – they share in Christ and prove it by continuing to believe. Faith will be tried, its profession will be tested. The genuine believer will appear by his perseverance in the faith. It is not enough to make some sort of beginning as a Christian. We must go on believing till the end. Real believers do this. Apostates do not, because the faith they professed to have is not genuine (compare 10:35-39; Rom 5:9,10; John 10:27; 17:11,12; Luke 22:31,32; 1 John 2:19).

3:15 Hardening the heart and rebelling against God is evidence of an unbelieving heart.

3:16 "Not all" – the whole nation of Israel, with only two exceptions (Num 14:1,2,30).

"Out of Egypt" – Ex 14:29-31.

3:17 Verse 10; 1 Cor 10:1-12; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6. The writer is warning of the possibility that the Hebrews of his generation too might face the wrath of God. It was essential for them to believe and obey God's revelation in Christ.

3:18,19 Verse 11; Num 14:11; Deut 9:24; Ps 78:10-12,21,22; Acts 7:51-53.

"Refused to believe" – see the note at John 3:36. It could also be translated "disobeyed." Disobedience and unbelief (v 19) work hand in hand. They are partners in every crime against God and man. And they are twin thieves which rob men of the opportunity to receive and enjoy what God offers to all. Then they kept Israel from entering Canaan, the promised land. Now, just as surely, they will keep men from entering heaven.

4:1-13 The theme of this section is entering God's rest – v 1. Believers in Christ do enter it, but unbelieving Israel did not – vs 2,3. This rest existed in Israel's day and they could have entered it – vs 4-6. Since they did not, and it was God's purpose that

gospel was preached to us, as well as to them. But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*. 3 For we who have believed enter into rest, as he said,

As I swore in my wrath,
if they will enter my rest.

And yet *his* works were finished from the beginning of the world. 4 For in a certain place he spoke of the seventh *day* like this:

And God rested on the seventh day
from all his works.

5 And in this *place* again,

If they will enter my rest.

6 Seeing, therefore, it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached

some people should enter, He appointed another day and time – vs 6-8.

Conclusion: there is a rest that can be entered now – vs 9,10.

Exhortation: make every effort to enter it – v 11, because God's Word can discern and forever bar the unbeliever from entering – vs 12,13.

4:1 "God's rest" means spiritual rest, the rest Jesus spoke of in Matt 11:28. It signifies salvation in Christ. The land of Canaan was only a type or picture of this rest (see note at Josh 1:18).

"Any of you" – he does not say "any of us." He is not suggesting that believers cannot know whether they are saved or not, or that they should go around in fear they may be lost (see 2:15; Luke 12:32; Rom 8:15; 1 John 5:13). The writer was not fearful for himself but for some of them. All of us should be alarmed when those who profess to be Christians show signs of unbelief and disobedience. And we should be careful to warn and exhort them – 3:13; 1 Tim 5:20.

4:2 The good news preached to Israel was this: the promised land is before you; go up and possess it – Deut 1:19-21. The good news preached to men now is: God offers you rest and salvation in Christ. Receive them by faith in Him. The people of Israel would not take possession of the land. In this way they showed their unbelief and disobedience. People now show their unbelief by not receiving Christ and taking possession of God's blessings in Him. Hearing the good news is not enough. Hearing must be mixed with faith, the kind of faith that results in obedience.

4:3 Belief in Christ is the only way of entering God's rest – the rest God spoke about in Ps 95:11.

4:4,5 The writer quotes Gen 2:2 and Ps 95:11 (again) to show there is a "rest" of God, and that it has been there since creation was finished. God's rest is a picture of the spiritual rest He gives to believers.

4:6-8 It is God's purpose that some among

did not enter because of unbelief, 7 again, he appointed a certain day, saying through David, "Today", after so long a time, as it is said,

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

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then afterwards he would not have spoken of another day.

9 Therefore there remains a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered his rest, has also ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. 11 Therefore, let us strive earnestly to enter that rest, lest any man fall after the same

men should enter His rest. Israel did not, even after they entered Canaan (which was a type or picture of that rest). Through Joshua God gave rest from human enemies (Josh 21:44; 22:4), but not spiritual rest. So God appointed a new time and called it "today." "Today" means this era from Christ's first coming onward. See 3:7. Neither Joshua, nor Moses, nor the law, nor the whole old covenant could give people the rest God wanted them to have. So God appointed another time and another covenant.

4:9 "Sabbath-rest" - in Greek "Sabbatismos" - Sabbath "observance" or "rest." Concerning the Sabbath see Ex 20:8-11. The Jews regarded the Sabbath as a type or picture of the next world - "The Israelites said, O Lord of the whole world, show us a type of the world to come. God answered them, That type is the Sabbath" (words found in a Jewish commentary). They said that psalm 92 was "a psalm for the Sabbath day because it refers to the world to come, which is all Sabbath and a rest unto eternal life." The writer of this letter here seems to be teaching the same thing.

4:10 When do believers enter God's rest? Certainly at the end of their earthly life. Then they cease from their toil and rest in God's presence. Compare Rev 14:13; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21-24. But, in a sense, to some extent they enter into rest now - Matt 11:28,29. The rest now is not the final Sabbath-rest, but it is a foretaste of that. And it means ceasing from any attempts to be saved by one's own works and trusting in Christ for salvation (see Rom 4:4,5). This rest begins now and will result in the final perfect rest in God's presence. If we do not begin this rest in Christ now, it is certain we shall not have the Sabbath-rest in the next world.

4:11 Compare Matt 11:12; Luke 13:24; 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Pet 1:10. Let us all be on the lookout for disobedience and unbelief in ourselves and in other Christians, and go forward together in faith to the goal. Let us make sure we will enter that final rest by making sure we have Christ's promised rest now and are moving ahead yoked to Him.

"Strive earnestly" - he is not teaching

example of unbelief.

12 For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any double edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 Nor is there any creature that is hidden from his sight. All things *are* naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we will give an account.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but *one who*

salvation by works, but emphasizing again a persevering faith (3:14).

4:12,13 The writer is saying that an "evil heart of unbelief", a heart "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (3:12,13), cannot be hidden from God. God's Word exposes the inner man, and God who gave His Word will know whom to receive into His rest and whom to keep out.

"Living and powerful" - 1 Pet 1:23. The Greek word translated "quick" in the KJV means "living", not swift in action.

"Sword" - compare Eph 6:17; Jer 23:29. "His sight" - 2 Chron 16:9; Ps 14:2; 90:8; 139:1-12; Jer 23:24; Matt 6:4.

"Give an account" - Matt 12:36; Acts 17:31; Rom 14:12; Rev 22:12.

4:14 The writer returns to the subject he introduced at 2:17 - Christ as high priest. He continues this subject, with breaks for exhortations and warnings, all the way to 10:18.

"Seeing then. . .let us" - 3:1; 4:1. God gives His truth that we might apply it.

"We have a great high priest" - it seems that men everywhere feel the need of a priest - someone who they think is nearer to God than they are and who can represent them to God. The idea is common to nearly every religion on earth. The Jews had priests and a high priest for 1400 years before Christ came. But the followers of Christ have no visible high priest, and Jews who did not believe in Christ might have thought and said that because they had no visible high priest on earth they had no high priest at all.

The writer of this letter refutes this false notion. Christ's believers have the greatest possible high priest - the Son of God Himself. And the fact that He is not on earth and not visible at all is no disadvantage - just the opposite. For He has gone through the heavens into the very presence of God on high. There He can represent His people far better than any high priest on earth could ever do. Ignorance of this truth holds people in bondage to human priesthood everywhere. So the writer takes great pains to present Jesus as high priest and to show how wonderfully fitted for this work He is.

4:15 "Touched" - this was one reason God

was tempted in all points as *we are, yet* without sin.

16 Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, so that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

5 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *relating* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He should be able to have compassion on those lacking understanding and on those who have gone astray, since he himself is clothed with weakness. 3 Because of this he is obligated to make offerings for sin for himself, as well as for the people. 4 And

established the priesthood for His people Israel. The ideal priest was one who knew the weaknesses, sorrows, troubles and needs of the people and could sympathetically present them to God – 5:1,2; compare Ex 28:29. The Lord Jesus can do this far better than any priest in Israel or anywhere else ever could.

“Our weaknesses” – every one of us has more than enough of these. Compare Matt 26:41; Rom 7:18; 8:26; 1 Cor 2:3; 2 Cor 12:5,9; Gal 5:17.

“Tempted” – 2:18; Matt 4:1-10. So He can sympathize with us. Jesus faced all the temptations that come to men on earth. He had real flesh and blood, real human nature – 2:14. He found out by experience how Satan rages against all who belong to God. He knows the terrific force of evil Satan brings against us and our faith. He has suffered from every fiery dart Satan can hurl. Yet He was “without sin.”

This could mean He never sinned, but always came through temptation victoriously. Or it could mean that He did not have a sinful nature. Both, of course, are true (note at 2:17). But is it possible for someone without a sinful nature to be tempted? Of course. See Gen 3:1-6. See also 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6. Indeed, it would seem that a sinless person who does not give in to temptation would feel the full power of the temptation in a way not possible to the sinful person who soon gives in to it.

4:16 “Throne of grace” – God’s throne where He sits to rule the universe. Christ our great high priest sits on it by His side – 1:3; Rev 3:21. Because of His sacrifice for our sins grace now reigns. See Rom 5:21; 6:14. He Himself urges us to come to God for all we need – Matt 6:9-13; 7:7-10; John 16:23,24. Our greatest needs are mercy and grace. We need to be kept from sinning, and to be forgiven if we do sin. We need the strength that grace can give us, and we need compassion and mercy when we fail in our weakness. Since we come to the throne of the universe we may be sure that no power that exists can keep God from giving us what we need. Since it is a throne of grace we know that He is willing to give us what we need (compare Phil 4:19). What more truth

no man takes this honour for himself, but only he who is called of God, as Aaron *was*.

5 So Christ also did not glorify himself to become high priest, but he who said to him,

You are my Son,
today I have begotten you,

6 also speaks like this in another *place*,

You *are* a priest forever according to
the order of Melchizedek.

7 *Jesus*, during the days of his earthly life in the body, when he had offered up prayers and requests with strong crying and tears to him

do we need to inspire us with confidence, and cause us to come before Him with faith?

5:1-10 He continues with the subject of Christ as high priest. Verses 1-4 give the qualifications of a good high priest among the people of Israel. Verses 5-10 show that Christ has these qualifications.

5:1 “Every” – he is referring to the religious system of Israel in the days between Moses and Christ.

5:2 “Those lacking understanding” – Lev 4:2; 5:17; Num 15:28. The priest could deal gently in such cases. But punishment was severe for those who sinned deliberately and arrogantly – 2:2; Num 15:30-36; etc.

5:3 “Offerings for sin for himself” – Lev 16:3-6. Like other men the high priest in Israel was weak and prone to sin. See the weakness of Aaron himself, the first high priest, in Exodus chapter 32.

“For the people” – Lev 16:15,16,32-34.

5:4 Ex 28:1.

5:5 1:5; Ps 2:7.

5:6 Verse 10; 6:20; 7:17. See Ps 110:4. Psalm 110 is a prophesy about Christ, the “son” of v 5. God the Father appointed Him high priest just as He had Aaron.

“Melchizedek” – see notes on chapter 7.

5:7-9 The writer shows that Christ had another of the qualifications of a high priest – the ability to “have compassion” on people. This ability was made perfect because of His sufferings on earth. In other places in the letter he shows how Christ fulfilled the other duties of a high priest – representing people before God (v 1; 7:25; 9:24), and offering a sacrifice for sins (7:27; 8:3; 9:11,12; 10:28; 10:10,14).

5:7 “Prayers and requests” – the Lord Jesus in His days on earth was always a person of prayer (Matt 14:23; Luke 5:16). But the writer here seems to be referring to a specific time when He was facing death. More than likely he is referring to Christ’s time in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46). There He was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He was in anguish and His sweat was like drops of blood. And God sent an angel to strengthen Him. This all speaks of a dreadful time of testing, and an experience of physical weakness (compare 2 Cor 13:4).

who was able to save him from death, was heard because of his reverence. 8 Despite being *the Son*, he still learned *the meaning of* obedience by the things he suffered, 9 and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. 10 *He was* called of God *to be* high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

11 We have many things to say concerning him, *things* difficult to explain, because you are slow to

And so loud cries and tears burst from Him. "Save him from death" – some commentators say that Satan was trying to kill Jesus in Gethsemane and that Jesus was praying that God would save Him from this and enable Him to die on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. But there is no teaching like this in the Bible. Others say that He was praying to be delivered from dying on the cross at all. This cannot be true. He knew He had come for the very purpose of dying (Matt 20:28; John 10:17,18). And He committed Himself to God for this very thing (Matt 16:21; John 12:27,28). Also the writer says that Jesus "was heard" – that is, His prayer was answered. And we know that He was not kept from dying on the cross, so His prayer could not have been for that.

The likeliest explanation is this: Jesus was praying that God the Father would deliver Him from the realm of death after He died, that death would not keep its hold on Him (Acts 2:24); in other words, that God would raise Him from the dead. Compare Ps 22:15-21 (vs 19-21 seem to be a prayer for His resurrection). But did He not know that God would raise Him? Why pray about it? He knew God had promised to raise Him (Ps 16:10).

But this is one important element in prayer – pleading with God to fulfill His promises (compare John chapter 17; Dan 10:2-19; etc). And when faced with the "cup" (Matt 26:39) containing the awful experience of 2 Cor 5:21, and with the hour of darkness upon Him (Luke 22:53), Jesus was overwhelmed and cried out with tears. And God heard Him (Matt 28:6). This was because of His "reverence" or "fear" (as it could be translated, meaning the reverential fear of God – Isa 11:2; notes at Gen 20:11; Ps 34:11-14; 111:10; Prov 1:7).

5:8 "Learned *the meaning of* obedience" – this does not mean He was at one time disobedient but gradually learned to be obedient. Disobedience is sin and He was never once disobedient (John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29; Phil 2:6-8; 1 Pet 2:21,22). But He learned in actual experience what obedience meant, what self-denial and temptation and suffering were involved in it. And face to face with the "cup" (Matt 26:39) He found out in experience that obedience was no easy thing.

5:9 "Made perfect" – this does not mean that there was some flaw in His character which needed to be corrected. See the note at 2:10. God took Him through suffering to

understand what you hear. 12 By now when you ought to be teachers, you still need someone to teach you again the basic things of God's revelation, and have become like those who need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who takes milk *is* inexperienced in the teaching of righteousness, for he is a little child. 14 But solid food is for those who have grown up, *to* those who by continual use have trained their minds to discern both good and evil.

make Him perfectly fitted to be our high priest. Without that process He would not have been the perfect one we needed.

"Obey Him" – in the light of this verse (and similar ones such as John 3:36; Acts 5:32; 2 Thess 1:8) can we think there is salvation for anyone who refuses to obey the Lord Jesus? This does not mean salvation comes by works but by what Paul called the obedience of faith (Rom 1:5). It is grace which gives us just such a faith and heart to obey (Eph 2:8,9). See note at Acts 22:10.

5:11-14 The writer begins another exhortation and warning which concludes at 6:12. It is a warning against falling away (6:6). He gave it because he saw in some of these Hebrew Christians a lack of progress in the Christian life.

5:12-14 This, no doubt, is the complaint of many a pastor, teacher and evangelist today also. Many Christians there are who, after years of Christian profession, still want only milk and seem able to take only milk, that is, the more simple truths of the gospel. They flock to evangelistic meetings and stay away from meetings for Bible study. And even the basic truths seem to slip away from them so that there is need to teach them over again.

"Solid food" – means solid teaching on such subjects as Christ as high priest and other great doctrines concerning Him. Refusal to take in the deep truths of God's Word reveals immaturity. See also 1 Cor 3:1-4.

"Inexperienced in the teaching" – such infants in the spiritual life may hear teaching about righteousness, but they have no skill or experience in applying it to their lives.

"Teaching of righteousness" – this probably means the same as the "solid food" of v 12. It is similar in meaning to the "wisdom" Paul taught to mature believers (1 Cor 2:6-10).

"Those who have grown up" – those who have grown strong in spiritual understanding and practice of God's Word. Distinguishing good from evil and truth from error is sometimes no easy matter. It requires "training" oneself, taking effort to learn the meaning of the deep things of God's word and to apply it in the situation one faces. It means constant effort and study and discipline. Those who remain spiritual babies are those who perhaps have little time and opportunity to develop spiritually, or who are not willing to make the effort.

6:1,2 "Perfection" – or "maturity" or "full

6 Therefore leaving the basic matters of the teaching concerning Christ, let us go on to perfection, *and* not lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying

on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do, if God permits.

4 For *here is something* impossible: those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the

growth - 5:14; Eph 4:13-15.

"Foundation" - it is not altogether clear what foundation he means. He is writing to Jews who had become Christians. He perhaps meant the foundation in the Old Testament which they had received as Jews. Or perhaps He meant the new foundation laid by the apostles for this New Testament era. His meaning is doubtful because of the six things he mentions here not one of them is distinctly Christian; all could easily be a part of the foundation laid in the OT.

"Repentance. . . faith in God" - notice the writer does not say "faith in Christ." This way of stating it would seem strange if he were speaking about the foundation of the Christian life (note on repentance at Matt 3:7; etc).

"Baptisms" - notice the plural. If he had been referring to Christian baptism would he not have used the singular? See Eph 4:5. "Washings" is a possible translation here, and could be a better one. In the Old Testament there were various washings - Ex 29:4; 30:19-21; Lev 11:25; 13:6; 14:8; 16:26; 17:16; Num 8:17; 19:18; etc.

"Laying on of hands" is also seen in the Old Testament - Num 8:10; 27:18; Ex 29:10; Lev 1:4.

"Resurrection" (Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19; Ps 16:10), and "judgment" (Ps 9:8; 82:8; Dan 7:9,10; Joel 3:12) are also in the Old Testament.

However, some scholars view the matter differently. They say that in the writer's mind "faith in God" could include the idea of faith in Christ; that "baptisms" could mean John's baptism, Christian baptism, and the baptism with the Holy Spirit; and that laying on of hands could mean the practice of the early Christians (Acts 6:6; 8:16-18; 13:3; etc).

Still it seems a strange list of things to use if one wished to describe the very foundation of the Christian life - there is no mention in it of Christ, of His incarnation and sacrifice for sin, or the giving of the Holy Spirit, or teaching about Christ's Church, or eternal life through Christ. But the meaning of these verses is doubtful and we should not be too dogmatic in what we say about them.

6:4-6 These verses, too, are not easy to interpret, and there have been great differences of opinion among scholars about the meaning of them. There are four principal interpretations of these verses.

First, they describe real believers in Christ and teach that they can fall away from Christ and lose their salvation.

Second, they describe believers, but if they fall away they do not lose their salvation but only the rewards they might have obtained by faithful service.

Third, they describe real believers who are warned against falling away because there is real danger of it, but actually they will not fall away.

Fourth, they do not describe real believers at all - the things listed in these verses are true of believers, but may be true also of Christians who have never been real believers.

The author of these notes rejects the first two interpretations. He believes the Bible clearly teaches that real believers in Christ do not fall away or commit the other sins connected with apostasy (note at 2:1-4). See 10:39; John 10:27; 1 John 3:9; 5:18. Compare also John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-29; 17:11-12; Rom 5:9,10; 8:28-39; Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:5. We should never use obscure and difficult Scriptures (like the ones here in Hebrews) to overthrow clear ones. These verses in Hebrews do not clearly state that true believers in Christ may fall away and be lost. In fact, faith in Christ is not mentioned in these verses at all.

The third interpretation given above seems more in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament as a whole. Satan tries to get believers to fall away, and they are in danger of it. But being in danger of it does not mean they will actually do it. They might do it if it were not for the Word of God, God's keeping power, and the prayers of Christ for them (compare Luke 22:31,32; John 17:11,12; 1 Pet 1:5). But because of these they are kept from falling away. And the warnings against falling away themselves are helps to keep them from falling away when the danger arises.

But the fourth interpretation given above may possibly be the true one. Verses 4-6 may be a description of those who know the truth, have been much influenced by it, have come very close to the kingdom of God, and yet have not actually entered it. Those who are not God's children, yet profess to be, can appear for a time as if they were (compare Matt 13:18-23; 24-30; 25:1-12; 2 Cor 11:14,15). All the things said in vs 4-6 are true of believers, but possibly they may also be true of those who are not believers but only seem to be.

6:4 "Enlightened" - describes people who know the truth. Compare 10:26. Christ's light has shined on them. But this need not mean that they put their trust in the light or become "sons of light" (John 12:35,36). People can know the truth without repenting and trusting Christ for salvation.

"Tasted of the heavenly gift" - this does not have to mean that they received the heavenly gift. The writer here may have used the word taste in contrast with eat (John 6:57). Compare Num 13:23,26. The Israel-

heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 if they fall away, *they cannot* be renewed again to repentance because they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes on it, and brings forth plants suitable for those who till it, receives blessing from God. 8 But that which bears thorns and briars *is*

ites who never entered Canaan because of unbelief (3:19), could still have tasted of the fruits of Canaan.

"Partakers of the Holy Spirit" – the writer does not say "received the Holy Spirit." Partaking or "sharing" may or may not mean that. There are different ways of sharing in the Holy Spirit. The false prophet Balaam did (Num 24:2). It seems that the apostate Judas Iscariot did (Matt 10:1; John 6:70,71). Simon in Acts 8:9-24 may be an example of this. Perhaps sharing here means to be present when the Holy Spirit is working in power, to be convicted by the Spirit (John 16:8-11), and brought by the Spirit to the place of repentance, to the very border of God's Kingdom.

6:5 "Tasted. . .word" – compare Matt 13:20,21.

"Powers of the world to come" – compare Matt 7:22,23. It may or may not be significant that the writer does not say they had believed in Christ or received eternal life, or were saved, etc. But if he did not say this, is it wise for us to say it?

6:6 "If" – actually this verse does not teach that the people described in vs 4,5 do fall away. It only states what would happen if they did. But the writer certainly seems to teach the danger of it.

"Fall away" – fall away is something far worse than falling into a sin. Peter fell badly but he was renewed to repentance (Matt 26:69-75). If we fall into sin we can be forgiven (1 John 1:9; 2:1; Matt 6:12; 12:31,32. See Prov 24:16). "Falling away" means apostasy, abandoning the faith. It means abandoning the truth altogether (note on 2:1-4). Why does the writer say it is impossible to renew them again to repentance? Why does he not say "renew them again to faith" if the people he described have faith? Repentance means a change of mind, and the meaning here may be this: these Hebrews at first thought Christ was not their Messiah. They changed their minds and thought He was. If after all that is said of them in vs 4,5, they turned away fully from Him, how can they be brought to change their minds once again?

"Crucifying. . .again" – this gives the reason why there can be no further repentance for them. They reject Christ and so take the side of His murderers as Judas did. The writer is speaking of something worse than backsliding. It is possible to bring backsliders to repentance and faith (2 Cor 2:5-11;

rejected, and *is* ready to be cursed. And its end *is* to be burned.

9 But, dear *brethren*, we are persuaded better things about you, and things that go along with salvation, though we speak like this. 10 For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed toward his name in the service you have performed to the saints, and are still performing. 11 And we want every one of you to show the same zeal to the full assurance of

Gal 6:1; Jam 4:8-10; Ps 32:3-5; 51:1-12; Jer 3:12; Ezek 18:30-32; Hos 14:1-4).

"Open shame" – if the Hebrews turned from Christ and went back to Judaism it would be known to everyone. And if anyone renounces Christ now and goes into another religion it becomes known to many people. And this means public disgrace for Christ and His gospel, and men will dishonor the true God because of it.

6:7,8 The writer gives this illustration to make his meaning clear. The land that produces a crop signifies believers (see Matt 13:23). Land that does not produce a crop signifies unbelievers or apostates. They produce no fruit for God (compare Matt 13:19-22; Luke 13:6-9; etc). Both kinds of land may receive rain (rain here signifies God's truth and the influence of the Holy Spirit), but both do not produce fruit for God. What a person's life produces reveals whether or not Christ is in Him. The thorns and thistles of apostasy are evidence that Christ was never in such people (compare 1 John 2:19). See Matt 3:8; 7:16-20; etc.

6:9,10 Evidently he wanted to remove any unnecessary alarm his words might have caused them (compare 4:1; Rom 8:15). The reason why he is confident that they will not "fall away", be "cursed" or "burned" is simply this: spiritual fruit had appeared in their lives. They loved God, worked for God, and helped the people of God (see 10:32-34). If things like this do not appear in a Christian's life where is the evidence that he is a believer? Even if all of vs 4,5 is true of him, if no fruit for God is seen in his life it is all in vain. He is only like land that brings forth thorns and thistles.

"Service. . .performed" – Matt 25:34-40; 1 Thess 1:3; etc.

6:11,12 Here is the lesson he wanted them to learn from the warning he gave in vs 4-8. It would do them (or us) no good to speculate about the meaning of all that, if they are not earnest about moving forward in the Christian life. The important thing is to go on believing in Christ and serving Him to the end of our time on earth. If we do this we will not become apostates and will not need to fear we will.

"Full assurance" – 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 5:13.

"To the end" – 3:6,14; 10:36.

"Lazy" – Matt 25:26; Prov 18:9; 24:30-34. Laziness in spiritual matters is disastrous, just as it is in any kind of work.

hope to the end, 12 that you be not lazy, but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, 14 *and* said,

Surely in blessing I will bless you,
and in multiplying I will multiply you.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men certainly swear by those greater *than themselves*, and an oath *given* for confirmation *is* to them an end of the whole dispute.

17 So God, willing more fully to show to the heirs of promise the unchangeability of his purpose, confirmed *it* with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us might have strong

encouragement.

19 This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm. It enters the inner *place behind* the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, Jesus *himself*, who has become high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth part of everything. By interpretation he is first "King of righteousness", and then "King of Salem" also, that is, King of peace. 3 *Being* without father, without mother, and without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, *in this* made like the Son of God he remains a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the plunder. 5 Certainly those who are of the

"Patience" - 10:36; Rom 8:25; Jam 1:4.
6:13-20 Here the writer concludes this section of exhortation (begun at 5:11) and brings us back to the subject of Christ as high priest (v 20). He has spoken of diligence, faith and patience in vs 11,12. Now he gives an example of one in the past who practiced these, and applies it all to believers now.

6:13-15 Abraham was the ancestor of all the Hebrews. Also he is the spiritual father of all who believe (Rom 4:11,16). The faith of Abraham is described in 11:18-19. He is a great example of faith and patience.

"Promise" - Gen 22:16-18.
6:16-18 If men swear to tell the truth what more can be demanded? Indeed, what more than that can men demand of God? Men after such an oath may lie, but God certainly will not (Titus 1:2). If He swears to do something we may be sure He will do it. The "two unchangeable things" (v 18) are God's promise and His oath. He gave them both that believers might have "strong encouragement", that they may be encouraged to believe and go on believing to the end. Believers have "fled for refuge" - fled from sin, and God's anger against it, from the fallen world, from all that would keep them from salvation (compare Num 35:9-29). They have laid hold of God's promise of eternal salvation.

"Refuge" - Ps 7:1; 18:2; 91:2; etc.
6:19,20 The kind of hope the Bible speaks of is not some weak and wavering thing. It is like a strong and secure anchor. It will never fail (compare Rom 5:2-5). An anchor holds a ship steady in one place in the sea. Hope holds believers steady to one place - to the "inner things behind the veil" (heaven, where Jesus is). They will not be wrecked by any storm of apostasy.

"Veil" - 10:19,20; Matt 27:51. The veil or curtain in both tabernacle and temple separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy

Place (the inner sanctuary). The Most Holy Place signifies heaven. Those believers had not yet entered there, but Jesus had. And they are forever bound to Him by faith and hope. He is there "before" them and "for" them - 4:44; 9:24; Eph 2:6; Col 3:1-4. He is there and will see to it that all of them get there (John 17:24).

7:1-3 Melchizedek was a type or picture of Christ who is both king and priest - 5:6,10; 6:20. Melchizedek appears only once in the history of the Old Testament - Gen 14:18-20, and is mentioned only once more in the Bible until this letter to the Hebrews - Ps 110:4. We know nothing more about him. The language here in v 3 is obscure. Because of it some scholars think he was actually Christ Himself. But if Melchizedek was literally the king of Salem in the land of Canaan then he could not have been Christ. And the writer here says he was "like" the Son of God, not that he was the Son of God.

What does it mean, then, that he was without "father or mother", etc? It probably means that there is no record of any of these in the Bible. We know nothing of his parents, his genealogy, his birth and death. He suddenly appears in the Bible and remains there always the same, always a king and priest, a picture pointing to Christ. He is a good picture. Christ is the King of righteousness, the King of peace, who is greater than Abraham, and who has no beginning and no end (1:2,3,8,10-12), and who is priest forever (5:6).

7:4-10 The writer shows the greatness of Melchizedek - he was greater than Abraham (vs 4-8), and greater than Levi (vs 9,10). This means higher in position. His purpose in showing this is to show that Christ's priesthood is greater than the priesthood of the tribe of Levi.

7:4 Gen 14:20.

7:5 "Levi" - this was the tribe of Israel from which all the priests of the old covenant came

sons of Levi who receive the office of the priesthood are commanded according to the Law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, even though they are descended from Abraham. 6 But he whose descent is not traced from them received tithes from Abraham, and blessed him who had the promises. 7 And without any contradiction the less is blessed by the greater. 8 And here men that die receive tithes. But there *they are received* by one about whom it is affirmed that he lives. 9 And, I may say, Levi also, who receives tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

11 Therefore, if perfection came by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* that another priest should arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 But the priesthood having been changed, it is necessary that there be a change of

the law also. 13 For the one about whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, and from it no man served at the altar. 14 For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang from Judah, and about this tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

15 And *this matter* is far more evident, since according to the likeness of Melchizedek another priest arises, 16 who has become *one*, not according to the law having to do with a command concerning bodily *origins*, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For he declares,

You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

18 For without doubt the previous commandment has been annulled because of its weakness and uselessness. 19 For the Law made nothing perfect, but bringing in a better hope *did*, and by this *hope* we draw near to God.

20 And since *he was* not *made a priest* without

(Num 1:48-53; 3:5-10).

"Tithes" - Lev 27:30; Num 18:24-28.

7:6 "He whose descent is not traced from them" - Melchizedek.

"Blessed him" - Gen 14:19.

7:7 "Greater" - the person in a higher position.

7:8 "Here" - in the case of the priests descended from Levi.

"There" - in the case of Melchizedek.

"That he lives" - v 3.

7:9,10 Melchizedek was in a higher position than anyone descended from Abraham, including Levi and the priests of that tribe. Levi was born about 150 years after Abraham paid a tenth to Melchizedek.

7:11-19 In the remainder of this chapter (and on to 10:18) the writer shows how Christ as priest is far superior to the priests of Levi's tribe. In these verses he begins by showing that the Old Testament priesthood was completely unsatisfactory. If it had been able to accomplish what God wanted done God would not have promised another kind of priest after the order of Melchizedek.

7:11 "Perfection" - 10:14. The priesthood of Levi's tribe could not take away men's sins, or change their hearts, or fit them for heaven.

"The law" - before God gave the law through Moses there was no priesthood of the tribe of Levi. That priesthood was a part of the old covenant (Ex 19:5).

"Aaron" - the first high priest under the law. He was, of course, of the tribe of Levi - Ex 6:16-20; 28:1-3.

7:12 The law and the Old Testament priesthood were tied together. Since the one failed the whole system failed, the whole old covenant failed (this the writer shows in chapter 8). And God laid it aside and brought in something new and better.

7:13,14 "Judah" - in His human nature the

Lord Jesus was descended from Judah (Matt 1:1,3-6,16). When Jesus was on earth the temple authorities would not have let Him enter into the Holy Place, or serve at the altar, nor would He have tried to do so (see 8:4; Num 3:10).

7:15-17 The writer has said that there has been a change in the priesthood and the law - v 12. This is clear not only because God has appointed one of the tribe of Judah as high priest, but because God did so on a new basis. The OT priests were chosen strictly according to their ancestry. They had to be descendants of Levi and Aaron. But God chose Christ because of His "endless life" - vs 16, 24.

7:17 The writer is showing that this prophecy in Ps 110:4 was also a prophecy about God's setting aside the whole old covenant with its priesthood and law.

7:18,19 "Previous commandment" - the commandment that only men who were descended from Aaron and Levi could become priests. That regulation was "weak and useless" and so the whole Old Testament priesthood and the old covenant based on it were weak and useless to bring salvation to men. They made nothing and no one perfect - v 11. We should learn a very important lesson from this. Since the OT priesthood which God Himself established was weak and useless, we may be sure that any human priesthood in any religion is even more weak and useless. But why did God establish something that proved to be weak and useless? To teach us that it is weak and useless, and to show us we need Christ the great high priest.

"A better hope" - 6:18-20. It is related to the priesthood of Christ. Because of Him and His work as priest on our behalf we can "draw near to God" - 10:19-22.

7:20-22 The writer gives another reason why Christ's priesthood is superior to the

an oath 21 (those priests were made *such* without an oath, but this *one* with an oath by him who said to him, The Lord swore and will not change his mind, You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek), 22 so much *more surely* has Jesus become a guarantee of a better covenant.

23 And in fact they were many priests, for they were prevented from continuing because of death. 24 But this *man*, because he goes on forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able also to save to the utmost those who come to God through him, because he always lives to make intercession for them.

26 For such a high priest is fitting for us, *he* priesthood of Levi's descendants. When God appointed Christ as high priest He promised very solemnly that He would be priest. There was nothing like this in the case of the priests of Levi's tribe. God's oath reveals His unchangeable purpose – 6:17. He wanted the Jews (and us) to be absolutely sure about the priesthood of Christ. That priesthood is at the very foundation of salvation for men. If Christ is not a priest after the order of Melchizedek there is no salvation for anyone, ever.

"A better covenant" (v 22) – the writer takes this up in 8:6-13.

7:23-25 Here is another reason why Christ as priest is greater than the priests of the Old Testament. Christ's priesthood is permanent, theirs was not. Each high priest in Israel died and left his work and position to another. Between Aaron and 70 AD (when the temple was destroyed) there were more than eighty high priests. Jesus lives and carries on His work forever. As a result He is able to save His people forever.

7:25 The word translated "utmost" could also be translated "completely" or "forever." Perhaps all these ideas are here. Jesus saves people perfectly and for all time and eternity. But He saves only "those who come to God through Him" – people who accept Him as the one way to God (John 14:6), as the one Mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5), as the one sacrifice for their sins (v 27; 9:28; 10:10; 1 Pet 3:18).

"Because" – Christ's saving people completely and forever is related to His intercession for them. See 9:24; 1 John 2:1; Rom 8:34. Believers in Christ are kept in a state of salvation by His life in heaven – Rom 5:9,10. When still on earth He gave examples of what His prayers for His people were like – John chapter 17; Luke 22:32. Because He is the interceding high priest in heaven He is able to bring all believers to glory (2:10), help them in temptations (2:18; 4:16), and enable them to hold fast their faith to the end (3:6,14; 10:39).

7:26-28 The writer gives another reason why Christ's priesthood is superior to the Old Testament priesthood: Christ Himself is far superior to all those priests. He meets our

who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens, 27 who does not need to offer up sacrifice daily, as those high priests, first for his own sins, and then for *those* of the people, for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. 28 For the Law ordains as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which was after the Law, *ordains* the Son who is consecrated forever.

8 Now the main point of what we have been saying *is this*: We have such a high priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle that was

real need; none of them ever could. He is perfectly holy; they were sinful and needed to offer sacrifices for their own sins. They had to make sacrifices again and again for the people; He took away their sins once and for all by His one sacrifice of Himself. They were weak men; He is the Son of God.

"Separate from sinners" – on earth He lived among sinners, ate with them, received them, was called their friend, showed love for them, was "made sin" for them, and died for them – Matt 11:19; Luke 15:2; Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 3:18. But in character He was always in a different class from them. Their sinfulness did not defile Him. He was without a sinful nature and never sinned.

"Exalted above the heavens" – 1:3; 8:1 – something not true of any other priest.

7:28 "Oath" – vs 20-22.

"After the law" – since the law and the OT priesthood proved weak and ineffective, God appointed another way.

"Consecrated forever" – this was not true of any other priest – v 19.

8:1-13 The writer continues to show that Christ's priesthood is superior to the OT priesthood (and so, of course, to any human priesthood imaginable). It is better because He serves as priest in the true sanctuary of God in heaven itself, but all Old Testament priests performed their work in an earthly sanctuary which was only a little picture of the heavenly one – vs 1-5. Also Christ's priesthood is superior because it is associated with a better covenant than the old one – vs 6-13.

8:1 See 1:3; 7:26.

8:2 "True tabernacle" – 9:1,11; Rev 7:15; 11:19; 13:6; 14:15; 15:5,6; 16:1. The spiritual, heavenly tabernacle (or temple) of God is called "true" in contrast to the Old Testament one described in Exodus chapters 25-30. The Old Testament tabernacle was not "false", but it was only a copy or picture of the true (the heavenly) one – v 5; 9:23,24; 10:1. See Exodus 25:9. (It would seem that the heavenly tabernacle extends to earth. Only the Most Holy Place, the immediate presence of God, is in heaven. The brazen altar – Ex 27:1-8 – was

erected by the Lord, and not by man.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this man also have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer gifts according to the Law, 5 who serve at the representation and shadow of heavenly things. So Moses was warned by God when he was about to make the tabernacle. He said,

See *that* you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain.

6 But now *Jesus* has received a more excellent ministry, and by so much more he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. 7 For if that first *covenant* had been without fault, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 But finding fault with them, he said,

See, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

a picture of Calvary where Christ died as a sacrifice. The basin or laver of the heavenly tabernacle is on earth and believers wash in it – compare Ex 30:17-21. The Holy Place is Christ’s Church on earth – compare Ex 25:31-40; Rev 1:12,13; 2:1. See the note at the end of Exodus chapter 30).

8:3 See 5:1. “This man” – the Lord Jesus. What He had to offer was Himself and His own blood – 7:27; 9:14.

8:5 Verse 2. “Moses was warned” – Ex 25:8,9,40; 26:30; 27:8. God does not lightly command something four times. He wanted the earthly tabernacle to teach heavenly truth. He did not want that truth to be distorted by a tabernacle not made in the pattern He gave.

8:6 The writer now begins to compare the old covenant which He gave through Moses with the new covenant established by the Lord Jesus. He continues this comparison up to 10:18. See notes on the old covenant at Ex 19:5,6,21-25; on the new covenant at Jer 31:31-34; Matt 26:28. See another comparison between the old and the new at 2 Cor 3:6-18. The new is far superior to the old because it accomplishes what God wants done in the salvation of men, and the old did not. A covenant is an agreement made between two parties or a promise made from one to another. In the old covenant God promised His blessings to the people of Israel if they obeyed His laws. In the new covenant God promises the forgiveness of sins, a new heart, the knowledge of God which results in eternal life. The one requirement on man’s part is repentance and faith.

“Better promises” – vs 10-12. Christ is the “mediator” of the new covenant – 9:15; 12:24. Through Him God established it and

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. Because they did not continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.

11 And among them no one will teach his neighbour, and no one his brother, and say: “Know the Lord”, for everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

13 By his saying “A new *covenant*,” he has through Him God continually makes it effective.

8:7 What was wrong with the old covenant? The people were all sinners and could not (and would not) obey God’s laws. Therefore it brought a curse rather than God’s blessings – Rom 8:3; Gal 3:10-13.

8:8-12 See notes at Jer 31:31-34.

8:9 “Did not continue in my covenant” – this was the whole problem. The old covenant of law could show the people what they should do and be, but it could not help them to do or be that. The whole history of the Old Testament from Exodus to Malachi is a story of Israel’s unfaithfulness.

8:10 God here promises to make His people new and different, to give them a mind and heart that can keep His commandments (compare John 1:12,13; 3:3-8; Rom 8:3,4; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Pet 1:23).

“My people” – 2 Cor 6:16-18; 1 Pet 2:9,10.

8:11 “Everyone. . .will know me” – Matt 11:27; John 14:7,17; 17:3,6; 2 Cor 4:6; etc. The new covenant promises the knowledge of God and gives what it promises. This is not merely a knowledge about God, but a direct, spiritual experiential knowledge. No other way, no philosophy, no religious system, can give this. See notes at 1 Cor 1:19-21; 2:7-16; Col 2:8.

8:12 Isa 44:22; Mic 7:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 13:38,39; Rom 4:6-8; 8:33. Notice here in vs 8-12 God’s words “I will” repeated again and again. The new covenant is based on God’s “I will.” The old covenant was based on the people’s words “We will” – Ex 19:8; 24:7. This is why the old was weak and failed, and why the new is powerful and succeeds.

8:13 “Obsolete” means no longer in use,

made the first old. Now that which is old and has become obsolete *is* ready to vanish away.

9 Then indeed the first *covenant* also had regulations for divine service, and an earthly sanctuary. **2** For a tabernacle was constructed. In the first *part*, were the lampstand, and the table, and the Showbread. This is called the Holy Place. **3** And behind the second veil, *there was that part of the tabernacle* called the Most Holy Place. **4** This had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant completely covered with gold in which were the golden jar containing manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant, **5** and over *the ark* the cherubim of glory

no longer acceptable. In God's eyes the covenant given through Moses was at an end. And with it the old priesthood was at an end.

"Ready to vanish away" – the temple still stood in Jerusalem and priests were still active there. But all that came to a stop in 70 A.D. See Matt 24:1,2; Luke 19:41-44. From that time there has been no Jewish temple in Jerusalem and so, of course, no priesthood functioning in accordance with OT laws.

9:1 In this chapter the writer continues the comparison between the priesthood of Christ and that of the OT. He speaks of the old tabernacle and the services of the priests there – vs 1-7. Then he shows what service and worship in the tabernacle signified – vs 8-10. Then he speaks about Christ's one sacrifice as high priest and His entry into the heavenly tabernacle – vs 11-28.

"Sanctuary" – note at Ex 25:8.

9:2 Exodus chapters 25-40 describe the tabernacle and its construction. See notes there on the significance of the items connected with it. Much of Leviticus and parts of Numbers deal with its ministry. The amount of space given to it indicates its importance in God's program of instruction for His people. Some forty chapters are given to it in the Bible. Only two chapters are given to describe God's creation of heaven, earth and man (though creation is referred to many times in the Bible after Genesis chapters 1 and 2). See the note at the end of Exodus chapter 30 on how to use the tabernacle as a spiritual exercise today.

"Lampstand" – Ex 25:31-40.

"Lampstand" is a more accurate translation than "candlestick." people do not put lamps on candlesticks.

"Table" – Ex 25:23-30.

9:3 "Second veil" – Ex 26:31-35. The first curtain separated the Holy Place from the courtyard.

9:4 "Censer" – Ex 30:1-10.

"Ark" – Ex 25:10-15.

"Manna" – Ex 16:14-16,33.

"Aaron's rod" – Num 17:8-11.

"Tablets" – Ex 25:16.

9:5 "Cherubim" – Ex 25:17-22.

overshadowing the mercy seat. About this we cannot now speak particularly.

6 Now when these things had been prepared like this, the priests went at any time into the first *part of the tabernacle*, performing the service of God. **7** But into the second *part* only the high priest went just once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the people's sins of ignorance. **8** In this way the Holy Spirit was showing that the way into the Most Holy Place was not yet revealed, while the first tabernacle was still standing.

9 The tabernacle was a symbol for the present time. Both the gifts and sacrifices offered in it could not make him who performed the service perfect in

"Glory" – Ex 40:34,35.

9:6 The "first part" means the "Holy Place" – v 2.

"Service" – Ex 27:21; 30:7,8; Lev 24:5-9.

9:7 The "second part" means the Most Holy Place – v 3. Leviticus chapter 16 describes this once-a-year work of the high priest. That chapter should be studied with this one for the full understanding of this one.

"Sins of ignorance" – the writer may not mean sins committed in ignorance of the law, or unknowingly, but in ignorance of God, that is, without a personal experiential knowledge of Him (compare Eph 4:17-19). Actually the day of atonement in Israel dealt with all the people's sins, including uncleanness, wickedness, and rebellion – Lev 16:21,22,30,34 (observe the repeated phrase there – "all their sins"). The work of the high priest in Leviticus chapter 16 was not limited to errors, to sins done unknowingly.

9:8 "The Holy Spirit" – 3:7 (notes at John 14:16,17). From this we see the writer's conviction that God's Spirit inspired the account of the tabernacle and the work of the high priest (see 2 Tim 3:16,17). What lesson did He teach by the day of atonement in Israel? That the way into God's presence then was not yet revealed. As long as the tabernacle (and later the temple) was in use no individual except the high priest in Israel ever got into the Most Holy Place. And the Most Holy Place was the one place in the tabernacle where God's presence was. The tabernacle spoke of barriers to God's presence, not access. Note at Ex 27:9-19.

This does not mean that no individuals in Israel ever got into God's presence apart from the tabernacle. They certainly did – compare Gen 5:24; 6:9; 27:7; Ex 33:14; Ps 51:11; 89:15). But in that era God had not yet revealed the way this could be possible. Now He has revealed it. Sinful men can come into the presence of God, the absolutely Holy One, only because Christ sacrificed Himself to take away their sins – 10:19,20; 1 Pet 3:18.

9:9 The Old Testament sacrifices were not able to take away the consciousness of sin and guilt. So they were not able to cleanse

regard to the conscience, 10 *but had to do* only with foods and drinks, and various washings, and regulations about the body, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation.

11 But Christ has come *as* a high priest of good things to come. *Going* through a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, 12 *and* not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, he entered in once *for all* into the Most Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the *ceremonially* unclean, sanctifies to *the extent of* outward bodily

the conscience – 10:2. And if the conscience is not clean, there can be no going into God's presence with "full assurance of faith" (10:22). Note on conscience at Acts 23:1.

9:10 The Old Testament regulations concerning food, etc (Leviticus chapter 11; Num 6:15,17; 28:7,8; Ex 30:17-21; Lev 16:24) were also only types, shadows and pictures of spiritual things. They had no spiritual value in themselves but were only external "regulations." And God did not give them for His people forever – only until the "time of reformation." The Greek word translated "reformation" means "making straight." The Old Testament regulations were only meant to last until God introduced a new arrangement (the new covenant established by Christ).

9:11-28 The writer takes up again the subject of Christ as high priest and shows how His ministry accomplishes what all the activities of the priests under the old covenant did not accomplish.

9:11 See 8:2,5.

9:12 "Goats and calves" – Lev 16:14,15,27.

"Own blood" – in vs 11-28 the word "blood" is used eleven times. Sacrifice and death also are used several times and these words imply blood. The writer shows that the blood (the sacrifice, the death) of Christ is so important because:

It cleanses the consciences of believers (v 14)

It was a ransom to set them free (v 16)

It is the only basis for forgiveness (v 22)

It purified "heavenly things" (v 23)

And it did away with sin (vs 26,28).

"Redemption" – v 15. Notes at Ps 78:35; Matt 20:28. Notice the redemption Christ obtained for believers is "eternal." Compare 5:9; 10:14. Its result is permanent. He has bought them at the price of His blood and they are His forever – 1 Pet 1:18,19; 1 Cor 6:20; John 6:37; 17:6,11,12.

9:13 "Heifer" – see Numbers chapter 19. This ceremony had nothing to do with taking away guilt or cleansing the heart from sin. Nor did any other animal sacrifice.

9:14 "Conscience" – conscience is the faculty in a human being which judges his actions and declares them either right or

purification, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this reason he is the mediator of the new covenant, so that as a result of *his* death as a ransom for sins *committed* under the first covenant, those who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 Now where there *is* a testament, of necessity there must also be the death of the one who made it. 17 For a testament *is* in force only after men are dead. It has no power at all while the one who made it is living.

wrong, good or bad. On conscience see Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom 2:15; 9:1; 1 Cor 8:7; 10:28,29; 2 Cor 1:12; 1 Tim 1:5; 3:9; 4:2; Titus 1:15. If a conscience is defiled with sin and conscious of guilt, it needs to be "cleansed." That is, it must be satisfied that sin and guilt have been taken away, that there is no longer any reason for God's judgment and punishment to come.

This is what the blood of Christ does. Our knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ, our faith that His blood was shed to take away our sins, satisfies our conscience. The blood of Christ does not cleanse us from the knowledge that we are sinners (1 John 1:8; 1 Tim 1:15; etc), but assures us that God's anger is removed from us. God uses the truth about Christ's sacrifice in our minds to instruct our consciences and so cleanse them. Compare Acts 15:9.

An awakened conscience that accuses and rages against us is a very painful thing. How can it find peace and rest? Only in Christ's sacrifice. When this happens we can freely and gladly "serve the living God." Observe the Trinity in this verse – the Son offered Himself to the Father through the Holy Spirit. Notes on the Trinity at Matt 3:16,17; etc.

"Without spot" – 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19; 2:22; 3:18.

9:15 "For this reason" – the fact that Christ's blood cleanses the conscience. This is what the OT sacrifices could not do – v 9; 10:2.

"Mediator of the new covenant" – 8:6-13. This covenant is based on the shed blood of the Lord Jesus – Matt 26:28.

"Ransom" – v 12; Matt 20:28.

"Under the first covenant" – Christ died for the sins of His people in all ages of the world. This includes all those who sinned before He came into the world. Compare Rom 3:25.

"Inheritance" – 1:2,14.

9:16 "Testament" – in Greek the word for "covenant" is the same as the word for "will" and "testament." In English (and many other languages) we use two entirely different words. In v 15 the writer has spoken of an "inheritance" which comes to believers. Now he says that this inheritance could not come unless the one who made the testa-

18 For this reason even the first *covenant* was not dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every commandment to all the people, according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, 20 and said, "This *is* the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you."

21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels *used in its* service. 22 And according to the Law almost everything is cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. 23 *It was* therefore necessary that the copies of things in the heavens should be purified by these *sacrifices*, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices

ment (Christ) died.

9:18-20 See Ex 24:1-8. The writer now speaks of the old covenant (Ex 19:5), as if it were a will or testament. God made this covenant and in it promised an inheritance to Israel (Deut 12:8-10; Josh 1:6; 23:4; Ps 105:11). But God did not die in order that this covenant or "will" should come into effect. Instead He ordained that animals should die. How can the death of animals bring God's testament into effect?

We must keep in mind that all that was a type or picture or shadow of things to come (vs 23,24; 8:5; 10:1). Israel's inheritance was a picture of the eternal heavenly inheritance promised to believers now. And the sacrifice of animals was a picture of Christ's sacrificial death. God knew then that later in time He would become a man and die, and gave that illustration of His coming death. Moses sprinkled literal blood on the people's bodies (Ex 24:8). Christ sprinkles His blood (spiritually, figuratively) in the inner parts - the heart and conscience of believers (v 14; 10:22).

9:21 This is not recorded in the Old Testament. The writer obtained the information from some other good source.

9:22 "Almost everything" - usually the blood of animals was required for atonement. But there were exceptions (Lev 5:11-13; Num 31:22-24).

"Without. . . blood. . . no forgiveness" - see Lev 17:11. Now God forgives men only on the basis of Christ's shed blood - Matt 26:28; Eph 1:7.

9:23 "Copies of things" - 8:5; 10:1.

"Heavenly things" - heaven itself did not need to be purified. That is God's holy dwelling place and there is no taint of sin or evil there. "Heavenly things" probably means those things of the new covenant, this new relationship between God and believers, the sphere where men are redeemed, have access to God and serve Him here on earth. They are spiritual realities having to do with believers' present sanctification, worship and service. The OT tabernacle, etc, had to be purified with the blood of animals (Lev 16:16,20). In the New Testament the

than these.

24 For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are only* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear now in the presence of God for us. 25 And it is not that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of other *sacrifices*. 26 For then he would have had to suffer often since the beginning of the world. But now once for all, at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed to men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. And to those who look for him he will appear the second time for

"house" of God is His people, Christ's Church (3:6). This "house" had to be purified with Christ's blood. Christ Himself and His blood are the "better sacrifices" of this verse.

9:24 "Copies" - or "representations." This is what the holy places in both the tabernacle and the temple were. They were made according to the pattern of "the true" - note at 8:2. Heaven is the "true" Most Holy Place.

"For us" - 7:25; 1 Tim 2:5; 1 John 2:1.

9:25 Lev 16:14,15,34.

9:26 "Once for all" - vs 12,28; 10:10,14. Christ's one sacrifice nearly two thousand years ago was all that is needed for men to be forgiven. He offered Himself and took away the "sin of the world" (John 1:29). Any repetition of this one sacrifice is unnecessary and unthinkable.

9:27 "Die once" - the Bible does not teach that individuals are born physically again and again on earth and die again and again. There is only one physical birth and one physical death. See notes on reincarnation at Job 11:12; John 9:3. The idea of reincarnation as a process whereby individuals can obtain salvation is completely unnecessary (as well as false). Christ by the sacrifice of Himself took away all our sins. In a moment of time any of us by trusting in Him can receive complete forgiveness, spiritual birth and salvation.

"Judgment" - Matt 10:15; Acts 17:31; etc. After that one death men die, there is something that awaits them, and it is not rebirth back into the world.

9:28 "The sins of many" - Isa 53:11; Matt 26:28. Compare John 1:29; 2 Cor 5:14; John 3:16; 1 John 2:2. Though Jesus died for the whole world only those who receive Him by faith have the forgiveness of sins.

"Second time" - see references at John 14:3. In this verse "salvation" means the final salvation of believers, viewed here as something future. It is like an inheritance to be received hereafter - 1:14; Rom 8:23,24; 1 Pet 1:4,5. Believers are saved already from the penalty of sin, from condemnation and hell. They are being saved from the power of sin (Matt 1:21; John 5:24; Rom 8:1-4; 1 Cor 1:21; etc). They

salvation, without *bearing* sin.

10 For the Law has a shadow of good things to come, not the very substance of the things. *So* with those sacrifices which they offer continually year after year *it* can never make perfect those who approach it. **2** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshippers once cleansed would no longer have a consciousness of sins. **3** But in those *sacrifices* sins *are* remembered again every year. **4** For *it is* will be saved from the presence of sin and its effects, and obtain complete salvation of spirit, soul, and body.

Notice the words "Those who look for him" – Matt 24:42-51. This means to look forward with hope for His appearance. Compare Titus 2:13. On the day of atonement (Leviticus chapter 16) after the high priest entered the Most Holy Place the people of God waited outside for His appearance. Jesus has entered the true Most Holy Place, heaven itself. Outside, on the earth, His people wait for Him. This suggests that this entire age between the first and second comings of Christ is like a great day of atonement.

10:1 "Shadow" – 8:2,5; 9:23,24. The law with its tabernacle and offerings and regulations and rules was only a type, a hint, a picture of "good things" – the things of Christ's ministry for men and the eternal salvation of His believers.

"Can never make perfect" – v 14; 2:10; 5:9; 11:40; 12:23. Animal sacrifices could not even begin to make anyone perfectly fit for God's presence (7:11,19). For the significance of animal sacrifices see notes at Lev 1:2.

10:2,3 See 9:9. "Consciousness of sin" – or, possibly, a "sinful conscience." The writer means that if the people had really thought that their sins were completely, finally taken away by their offerings, their consciences would have been cleansed; they would have realized that their heart need no longer accuse them. See 9:14.

10:4 "Not possible" – why was this impossible? Animals could not be a substitute for men and die in their place. All they could be was a picture, a type of someone dying in the place of men. Animals have no moral nature. They were only ignorant, unwilling victims which could never bear the guilt and punishment due to the sins of man. This punishment is spiritual death, separation from God. See Matt 25:41; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20:14.

Even men could never be a sin offering for other men. Every man is a sinner and can die only for his own sins, not the sins of someone else. If there were a sinless man, and if he could be a sacrifice for sin, he could only die in the place of one other man, not for all men. Also God would have to agree to it, and He has not. To grasp fully the teaching of the Bible about atonement and substitutionary death we should

not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

5 Therefore when he comes into the world, he says,

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have had no pleasure.

7 Then said I, See, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God.

understand the following facts.

All sin is against God – see Ps 51:4. Even those sins which seem to be only against other people, or oneself, or the world, are really against God, because all men and all creation are His property. If a person destroys your house he is sinning against you because it is your house. If a person harms another human being or property or the environment he is sinning against God because everything is God's. If a person sins against you (like destroying your house) and you forgive him without demanding payment you are bearing the results of his sin against you. You are showing that you are willing to pay the cost of it.

If God is willing to forgive all men, then he must be willing to bear the results of their sins and pay the cost Himself of what they have done. Sin cries out for punishment, for vengeance (see Num 31:1-3; Deut 32:41,43; Isa 34:8; 47:3; Rom 12:19). Who will, who can bear this punishment? Who can bear the just penalty that God demands for His broken laws? Can an animal sacrificed for men bear this penalty? This is impossible. Then who? Only guilty people, or else God Himself. Only He, coming as a sinless man and offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of men, could bear their penalty and take away their guilt. This He did.

This is the meaning of Christ's incarnation. He, the sinless God-man, could be the substitute for all men. All sin was against Him. In our place He bore all sin in His own body on the cross and suffered its penalty (2:9; 13:12; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 2:24). Atonement and forgiveness are based on suffering – not the suffering of a sacrificial animal, not our own suffering, but God's. If Christ is not the incarnation of God there could have been no final and complete atonement for sin.

10:5-7 See notes at Ps 40:6-8. This quotation is from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) dating from the 3rd century BC. The writer is showing from the OT that his teaching about animal sacrifices is correct.

"Sacrifice and offering" – God did not want animal sacrifices but a much better sacrifice than those. "I" in v 7 means Christ. "Your will, O God" here means God's will that Christ should be the one sacrifice for the sins of men.

10:7 Matt 26:39; etc.

8 Above when he said, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin you did not desire, and had no pleasure *in*" (which are offered by the Law), 9 and then said, "See, I come to do your will, O God." He takes away the first *things* so that he may establish the second.

10 By this will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

11 And every priest stands daily ministering and offering over and over the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. 12 But this man, after

10:8 "Offered by the law" – God appointed them so that they could be an illustration of the sacrifice of Christ. But He knew that they could not accomplish what He wanted.

10:9 "That he may establish the second" – he means the old and new covenants. He has set aside the first one – 8:7,13.

10:10 "Sanctified" – by completely fulfilling God's will and dying for believers Christ has made them holy. This means He has set them apart and consecrated them to be God's people – 1 Pet 2:9. See notes on holy and sanctify at Lev 20:7; John 17:17-19. The word here in v 10 does not speak of the life of holiness believers are to live. That is seen in 12:10-16. Believers in Christ are now holy, they are being made holy (12:10), they will finally be made completely holy (Col 1:22). This is true of all His believers, not merely a special few.

10:11 "Stands" – there was no chair in the tabernacle or temple. This may well signify that the work of the priests there was never finished.

"Never take away sins" – v 4.

10:12 "Forever" – vs 10,14; 9:12,25-28. His one sacrifice is forever, because no other sacrifice for sin is needed.

"Sat down" – this indicates that His work of offering a sacrifice was finished forever. Nothing can be added to it. See John 19:30. Nothing that any so-called priest can do now is in any way necessary for the salvation of anyone.

"Right hand" – the writer brings us back to where he started his letter – 1:3.

10:13 "Footstool" – 1:13; Ps 110:1. God the Father has not yet made Christ's enemies a "footstool." Christ still waits for that time. It will come – Rev 11:15-18.

10:14 For many hundreds of years priests sacrificed many thousands of animals each year, but by all that not one sin was taken away, not one person made "perfect." But Christ's one offering made all believers in Him perfect forever. What does this mean? One meaning of the Greek word translated "perfected" is "made complete." In this verse this would mean this:

Christ's sacrifice for His people saves them completely with nothing lacking (compare 7:25).

His one sacrifice is the basis of a perfect standing before God. By it every barrier has been removed and perfect reconciliation made.

he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. 13 From now on he waits expectantly until his enemies are made his footstool.

14 For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

15 *Concerning this* the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us. For after he first said, 16 "This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them in their minds," *he adds*,

Christ has perfectly taken away their sins – not one is counted against them (Rom 4:8; 8:33).

He has given them a perfect relationship with God (Rom 8:1,15; 2 Cor 5:18,19).

He has perfectly cleansed their conscience (9:14).

He has perfectly fitted them to enter the presence of God now and forever (v 22; Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18).

That this is the meaning of the word "perfected" as used here is clear from the verses which follow (up to v 23). No believer on earth is perfect in the sense that he has no flaw, or has no sin in him, or never errs – Jam 3:2; 1 John 1:8. No believer yet is perfect in every sense – see Phil 3:12 where the same word is used. That kind of perfection awaits the future – 1 John 3:2.

"Forever" – 5:9; 9:12. The results of Christ's sacrifice for His people individually and collectively are permanent and irreversible.

"Those who are sanctified" – v 10. If this phrase is translated "those who are being sanctified" (as some scholars say it should be translated), then the phrase would point out what is happening to all believers in Christ; it would be a definition of what all real believers are. Compare 12:5-10; Matt 5:6,8; Rom 6:15-22; 8:12-14; 1 John 3:3,6,9,10. All believers in Christ, not merely some exceptionally holy and dedicated ones, are "made perfect" in Him, and have been sanctified, and are being sanctified.

10:15 "Holy Spirit also is a witness. . . saying" – 3:7; 9:8; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21. Here He reveals what it means for believers to be "made perfect."

10:16 See Jer 31:34. This is a very important element in the perfection that Christ brings believers into. God gives them a spiritual understanding of His laws and an inner desire and ability to obey them. This is what Christ had (v 7), and this is what God gives His people on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. It is a very important mark of the new covenant. Indeed, without it what real evidence is there that anyone is a believer? See John 14:15,23; Rom 8:3,4; 1 Cor 2:16; 2 Cor 3:3. What use is it for a person to say his sins are gone if he has no heart for God, no mind to serve Christ, no delight in doing God's will revealed in the Bible? Can the blessings of the new covenant be divided? Can we have one and refuse the others?

17 "And their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more."

18 Now where these *have* forgiveness, *there is* no more offering for sin.

19 Therefore, brothers, we have boldness to enter into the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way that he has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 and *we have* a high priest over the

10:17 This too helps to show the writer's meaning when he says Christ has made believers "perfect." He has given them perfect forgiveness of sins. The meaning here is the same as Paul's meaning when he says believers have been counted righteous. See Rom 3:24; 4:6-8; 8:33. Christ has made the believer's standing before God perfect.

10:18 "No more" – the work is finished completely and perfectly and forever. God does not require any other sacrifice or any repetition of Christ's one sacrifice.

10:19-23 Here, in some of the most significant and powerful words ever penned, is the essence of all the writer has been saying up to this point.

10:19 "Therefore" – 2:1; 3:1; 4:1,14; 6:1. The writer has concluded the teaching about Christ as High Priest and Mediator of the new covenant. Now he exhorts all believers to behave in accordance with all this truth. In doing so he further shows how "perfect" is their standing with God.

"Boldness to enter" – under the old covenant only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place and that only once a year (9:7). No ordinary Israelite ever had the boldness to enter there. Now any moment of any day the believer in Christ can confidently enter the heavenly Most Holy Place – that is, can enter the presence of God. God has made all believers "priests" (13:15,16; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6), and all may follow their high priest into God's presence. But this is only because the blood of Jesus has made atonement for sin and removed that barrier that separated God and men.

10:20 This way of Christ is new compared with the way of the old covenant which kept people at a distance – Ex 19:21-25; 27:9-19. It is a living way, a way that depends on Christ's life and gives new spiritual life to those who believe in Him – John 14:6; 3:1-4. This is in contrast to the dead ceremonies and rituals of the old covenant.

"The veil" – in both the tabernacle and the temple there was a curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (9:3). This signified that the way into God's presence was not yet revealed – 9:8. That curtain was a symbol of Christ. When Christ came in a human body (10:5) and died for our sins the curtain in the temple was torn into two parts – Matt 27:50,51, leaving a gap in the middle. In other words, His death revealed the way into God's presence. We can enter the Most Holy Place because of Christ's crucified body, torn for us.

10:21 "We have a high priest" – 2:17;

house of God. 22 *So* let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold firmly the confession of *our* faith without wavering (for he *is* faithful who promised).

24 And let us consider how to stir each other up to love and good works, 25 not forsaking our meetings together, as the way of some *is*, but

4:14; etc.

"House of God" – 3:6.

10:22 "Let us draw near" – see 4:16; Eph 2:18; 3:12; Rom 5:1,2; Jam 4:8. The writer says four things are involved in drawing near as we ought.

"Sincere heart" – Luke 12:1; Matt 5:8; John 4:23,24; 1 Cor 5:8.

"Full assurance of faith" – 11:1,6. Compare 3:12. This is what all believers should have and can have. We should be sure that Christ has taken away our sins, that He is our high priest, that His way brings us to God, that God will receive us into His presence. Doubts and fears about these matters should have no place in our hearts. And the better we understand what God has revealed in this letter to the Hebrews the greater our assurance can be. Compare 3:14; 6:19; 1 John 5:13; 2 Tim 1:12; John 14:1; Luke 12:32.

"Sprinkled from an evil conscience" – this "sprinkling" of the heart speaks of an inner experience. See 9:13,14. The blood of Christ is sprinkled on the believer's heart. This means that the understanding of Christ's sacrifice, and belief in it, gives cleansing to his heart.

"Bodies washed with pure water" – all through this letter the writer has regarded the physical things of Old Testament worship as symbols of spiritual realities. He is doing the same thing here (though some scholars think he was referring to Christian baptism). See Ex 30:17-21; Lev 8:6; 16:4. This physical washing of the bodies of the priests signifies the cleansing of the acts of the bodies of believers now. They are the priests under the new covenant – v 19. Their outward behavior is to be clean, just as their hearts are to be clean. The new and living way which God has opened for believers now was pictured to some extent in the Old Testament. See the note on the spiritual use of the tabernacle at the end of Exodus chapter 30.

10:23 "He is faithful" – 6:16-18; Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:9,10. We should not dishonor Him by doubt and unbelief – these would suggest that He is not faithful to His promises.

10:24 In vs 19-23 he has spoken of the relationship of believers to God, now he shows they have responsibilities to one another. See also 3:13; Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 9:24; Col 3:16.

"Consider" – we ought to give thought as to how to go about encouraging others to love Christ more and to serve Him better.

10:25 No believer should give up going to

encouraging *each other*, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

26 For if we wilfully go on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, 27 but *only* a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will consume the adversaries. 28 He who despised Moses' law died without mercy on *the testimony of*

meetings where other believers will be. Each one needs fellowship and each one should encourage others in this life of faith. What is meant by seeing "the day approaching"? Possibly the writer meant the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Matt 24:1-3; Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24). This was very near to the time he wrote this letter. Or he may have meant the day of Christ's return (9:28; Matt 24:33). Or he may have included both in this phrase. Many among the first generation of Christians were looking for both of these events to happen at more or less the same time.

10:26-31 This is the fourth warning against apostasy. See note at 2:1-4. This one concerns deliberately sinning against the light of the glorious truth God has revealed through Christ and about Christ.

10:26 "Go on sinning" - this describes a settled state of the heart and life, not one or more acts of sin. The writer does not say that he thinks any of them will fall into this condition. He uses the word "if" (compare 6:6). In v 39 he says he is sure that the believers to whom he is writing will not be guilty of it (compare 1 John 3:9,10).

The writer seems to be speaking about one kind of sin in particular. Believers may sin and obtain forgiveness (1 John 1:9; 2:1; 5:16). But there is a sin for which there is no forgiveness. Here that sin is described as rejecting Christ and His sacrifice, turning away from the new covenant in His blood, and refusing to obey the voice of God's Spirit (v 29). There are those who teach that if believers commit a sin they may be lost forever. This is not the teaching of the New Testament - Matt 6:12; 1 John 1:9; 2:1.

"Knowledge of the truth" - he does not say "after repentance and faith." We may have the knowledge of the truth and yet refuse to repent and believe in Christ. The sin the writer speaks about in this verse may be this continual refusal. That is indicated in the next words.

"No more sacrifice" - if anyone rejects Christ's sacrifice he has cut himself off from the one way of forgiveness. And if such a person thinks that he can offer again the OT sacrifices (or any other such sacrifices), and that God will accept them, he is making a grave mistake.

10:27 "Judgment" - 9:27; Acts 17:31; Rev 20:11-15.

"Fiery" - 12:29; 2 Thess 1:7; Matt 3:10; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 16:24; Rev 20:14.

"Adversaries" - he means God's enemies. Anyone who deliberately rejects the truth God

two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought deserving who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who has said,

Vengeance is mine, I will repay,

has revealed about Christ and His one sacrifice for sin will find that they are among God's enemies. Compare John 7:7; 15:18; Rom 5:10; Jam 4:4.

10:28 See 2:2; Deut 17:6,7. For sins under the law that were punished by death see Ex 21:36. See an example in Num 15:30-35.

10:29 This is the sin the writer speaks of in v 26. Compare 6:6; Matt 12:31; 1 John 5:16,17. Deliberate sin against the old covenant was punished by death. The new covenant is far greater than the old, so sin against it is far worse than sin against the old. The greater the light and truth God gives, the greater our responsibility to obey it, and the greater the punishment if we do not. Will a true believer in Christ commit the sin described in this verse - trample Christ under foot, count His blood unholy, etc? It seems impossible in the light of other teaching about believers in the New Testament. See John 5:24; Rom 8:1,28-33; Phil 1:6; 1 John 3:9,10; etc.

But what about the phrase "the blood. . .with which he was sanctified?" Can a person be "sanctified" by Christ's blood and not be a believer, not be saved? The word sanctification does not necessarily imply salvation and faith. The root meaning is to "set apart" (notes at Lev 20:7; John 17:17-19). For a case of unbelievers being sanctified see 1 Cor 7:14. Let us keep in mind that in this letter we have a comparison of the old and new covenants, and that it was written to Hebrews. They knew that as a nation Israel was sanctified by blood (9:18-20; Ex 24:7,8; 31:13; Lev 21:8). But this did not at all mean that every individual in Israel was a true believer or saved from God's wrath - see 3:10,11,19.

The foundation of the new covenant is Christ's blood - 9:15. See 13:12, which says that Christ suffered to sanctify "the people" with His own blood. The new covenant was made with the house of Israel - 8:8. The nation of Israel is still set apart (sanctified) from other nations for God's special purpose (Rom 9:1-5; 11:11,25-29). But most of them reject Christ and remain without faith and salvation. And is it not possible to say that the visible church on earth is sanctified by the blood of Christ? And is it not true to say also that a great many in the visible church are unbelieving and have never been saved? See also 1 Tim 2:6, which says that Christ gave Himself as "a ransom" for all men. The ransom He gave was Himself, His own blood - 1 Pet 1:18,19.

10:30 Deut 32:35,36; Ps 135:14.

says the Lord.

And again,

The Lord will judge his people.

31 *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

32 But recall the former days, when, after you were enlightened, you patiently endured a great struggle with sufferings. 33 On the one hand, you were made a spectacle by both insults and oppression, and on the other hand, you associated yourselves with those who were so treated. 34 For you had compassion on me in my chains, and endured joyfully the plundering of your possessions, because you knew that you have in heaven a better possession and

one that lasts. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence. It involves a great payment of reward. 36 For you have need of patient endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. 37 For yet a little while and he who is coming will come, and will not delay.

38 "Now the righteous will live by faith, but if *anyone* draws back, my soul will have no pleasure in him."

39 But we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

10:31 Falling into the hands of the living God is a fearful thing because God is holy, hates sins and will surely punish unbelief and rebellion. We need not worry about this if we receive God's truth and follow it, if we do as He says in vs 19-25.

10:32-39 As he did in 6:9-12 after the warning against falling away from the truth, so he does now. He wants them to know he believes they are saved people who will not commit the sin of vs 26-29. He wants them to have confidence and go on proving their faith by their deeds.

10:32-34 Their firmness in the face of suffering, their love for other people of Christ, their willingness to lose all things for Christ's sake – all this was strong evidence that their faith was real.

"Struggle" (v 32) – v 26; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:6; 2 Tim 3:12.

"One that lasts" (v 34) – see 6:12; Matt 6:19,20; Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 1:4. Eternal possessions are what every believer in Christ has, so he should not be much concerned with what happens to his possessions down here, or whether he even has any or not.

10:35-36 "Reward" – Matt 19:28-30; Rev 22:12.

"Patient endurance" – see 3:6,14; 6:11; Rom 3:3-5; 8:24,25; Jam 1:2-4. Simply going on enduring all things and keeping faith in Christ in spite of anything that happens – this is what every believer must do. And the writer is confident that they will do so (v 39). We should have the same confidence.

10:37,38 Hab 2:3,4. See also Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11. God counts men righteous when they believe Him – Rom 3:24,25,28; 4:24; 5:1. Having been counted righteous they begin a life of faith which goes on to the end of their time on earth (2 Cor 5:7). In Hebrews the emphasis is on this living by faith and persevering to the end by faith.

"If anyone draws back" – 6:6.

10:39 "We" – he means true believers in Christ (he knew he was one, and they had given much evidence that they were – vs 32-34; 6:11). "If" they "draw back", God

will not be pleased; it will mean destruction for them. But the inspired writer says they will not draw back. Some say even true believers may draw back, commit the sins described in v 26; 2:3; 3:12; 6:6; 12:25, and be lost forever. The writer indicates that they will not. Faith is much more powerful than some people think. It is stronger than the world (1 John 5:4).

It can move mountains and make seemingly impossible things possible (Matt 17:20; Rom 4:19-22).

It enables us to see the invisible (2 Cor 4:18).

It is the instrument God has chosen to save men and to keep them saved (Eph 2:8; 1 Pet 1:5) – so it must be the very best instrument for that.

Will an instrument God has selected fail to achieve His purpose? It is an object of Christ's special prayer for believers (Luke 22:32). Will it, then, fail? The writer to Hebrews expresses his confidence that it will not. See the note at Rom 5:9,10 also. True believers in Christ go on believing to the final salvation God has promised them. In the next chapter he shows something of the power of faith.

11:1 This is the only place in the Bible where faith is defined in words (many places define faith by revealing it in action). Faith has to do with two areas or spheres – the future (what we hope for), and the unseen. God has made promises and given revelations concerning these two spheres. Faith believes these promises and relies on these revelations. This brings assurance to the heart. Faith is not a leap into the dark; it is a leap into the light. It is not wishful thinking; it is based on the powerful evidence of God's Word. True faith does not believe every idea about God that men may have, or everything that men think is God's revelation. It believes the truth revealed in the Bible.

"Assurance" – the word also means "substance" or "essence" or "nature" or "confidence" but here "assurance" seems best. The Greek is a combination of two words,

2 For by it the forefathers obtained a good commendation.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were created by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain *did*. By it he obtained a testimony that he was righteous, God testifying of his offerings. And by it, though he is dead, he still

one meaning "under", the other meaning "standing." In other words, faith is something which stands under something else, something like a foundation. What is this something else that faith stands under? Here in Hebrews it is all that is hoped for in Christ. Faith is a true foundation for our hopes. Without faith we would have no right to hope and no good reason for hoping. And faith is a foundation, a quality, which enables us to stand under every kind of hardship, difficulty or suffering that could possibly destroy hope. Compare Rom 5:1-4.

"Conviction" – or "evidence" or "proving" or "exposing" – the Greek word may mean any of these. The verb is used in John 3:20; 16:8; 1 Cor 14:24; Eph 5:11,13; etc. Faith is a conviction that the unseen things the Bible speaks of, actually exist. In a way, it brings them to light, enables the unseen to be "seen." Compare v 27; 2 Cor 4:18.

11:2 "Forefathers" – here means the people of God who lived in olden times. God commended them for their faith. The commendation was this: out of the whole human race they alone were on the right road, believed the one true God, were righteous before God. We have a part of that commendation in this chapter. From God's point of view the history of mankind is a history of those who believed Him. Faith and what it accomplished is what really matters, for that is what will last forever; all else passes away (1 John 2:17).

11:3 Observe that faith is not contrary to understanding or reason – faith gives understanding. It is like the eye which lets in the light. Believers know how the universe came into being because God has revealed it. They need not speculate about its origin as unbelievers do. God spoke and creation began (Gen 1:1,3,6,9, etc; Ps 33:6; Isa 40:26; 42:5; John 1:3; Col 1:16).

11:4 Now he begins to speak of the "forefathers" who had faith. Not all of them were great or exceptional people (Abel was a shepherd, Jacob and Samson were full of faults, Rahab had been a prostitute, etc). But they all had one thing in common – they believed God and in this they are examples to us all. Not all Old Testament believers are here by name. The writer chose various ones to illustrate various aspects of faith, the many sides of faith. The results of faith as seen here are three.

First, it caused those who had it to do something. True faith is not lifeless, not

speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so he would not experience death. He was not found, because God had taken him away. For before his being taken away he had the testimony that he pleased God.

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*, for he who comes to God must believe that he exists, and *that* he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

inactive. It is a powerful force which always produces action (notes at 10:39; Jam 2:14-26).

Second, faith obtained blessings from God. God blessed each believer in this list in some wonderful way or other.

Third, faith enabled those who had it to endure all things and endure to the end. So true faith works, obtains, and perseveres. A faith that does not do these three things is not true Bible faith.

"Abel" – see Gen 4:1-10. In him we see the relationship between faith and sacrifice. This is where all of us as sinners must begin, and that is one of the chief teachings of this letter. Abel's faith was based on a revelation (true faith always is), and by faith he chose the sacrifice God had appointed. Cain refused to do this. So Abel's sacrifice was better than his.

"Faith. . . righteous" – compare Gen 15:6; Rom 1:17; 3:22; 5:1. By his example Abel still speaks today and says "Believe God's revelation and choose God's appointed sacrifice." Now this sacrifice is the Lord Jesus Christ – 7:27; 9:12,26,28; 10:10,14.

11:5 Enoch illustrates the relationship between faith and fellowship with God. See Gen 5:21-24. There is no possibility of knowing God or walking with God apart from faith. Unbelief calls God a liar (1 John 5:10), and how can there be fellowship between two persons when there is distrust and slanderous thoughts in the heart of one? Enoch illustrates also the relationship between faith and immortality, the change that will come to living believers when Christ returns (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thess 4:15-17).

11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please him" – not merely difficult. Unbelief is not a small fault God can overlook, not some sort of misfortune. It is a deadly sin that strikes at the very heart of that relationship that should exist between God and man. It is the inner choice of a person for sin and darkness instead of God and light. It is a rejection of God's revelation and God's Son. And God punishes it as it deserves – 3:11,12,19; John 3:36; Rev 21:8.

Observe that faith accepts two things as true: that the God revealed in the Bible exists, and that He will reward the earnest seeker. Here are the two realms of v 1 – the unseen (God), and the future (rewards). Faith accepts these two truths because God has revealed them – 1:1-3; Isa 44:6; 45:5,18,21; John 1:18; Matt 7:7,8.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God about things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to save his household. By it he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to a place that he would afterwards receive for an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he lived in the land of promise, as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

11 Through faith Sara also received strength to become pregnant, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she considered the one who had promised faithful. 12 Therefore from just one man, and him as good as dead, came offspring *as many* as the multitude of the stars of the sky, as innumerable as the sand at the sea shore.

"Earnestly seek him" – see Deut 4:29; Jer 29:13.

11:7 Noah illustrates the connection between faith and refuge from God's anger against sin. See Gen 6:9-7:5. Now Christ is the refuge for people. They are safe under His protection.

"Fear" – notes at Gen 20:11; Ps 34:7-11; 111:10; Prov 1:7.

"Household" – compare Acts 16:31.

"Condemned the world" – an example of faith condemns unbelief as light condemns darkness (compare John 3:18-21; 15:22-24).

"Righteousness which is by faith" – Rom 1:17; 3:24,25; etc.

11:8-19 This chapter gives more space to Abraham than to anyone else. He is the supreme example of faith in the Old Testament and is called "the father of all who believe" – Rom 4:11,16. His life is an illustration of several different aspects of faith.

11:8 See Gen 12:1-5; Acts 7:2-4. Here is the relationship between faith and obedience to God. Without faith there will be no real obedience and if there is no obedience it is proof that there is no faith. See 5:9; John 3:36; Acts 5:32; Rom 1:5; 2 Thess 2:8; and the note at Acts 22:10. God called Abraham to leave everything behind and to set out for an unseen place. So he illustrates also the connection between faith and separation from one's former way of life, faith and forsaking all (compare Luke 14:33; 18:28-30; 2 Cor 6:17,18). But is it not foolish to set out and not know where one is going or what one will be doing? Foolish to man's reason, perhaps, but not to faith and its greater understanding.

11:9,10 Gen 12:6-9. Abraham's living in tents and being frequently on the move illustrates the relationship between faith and pilgrimage. See vs 13-16. Abraham had his eyes on the eternal world, so he did not

13 These all died in faith, not having received the *things* of promise. But they saw them far off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And certainly, if they had been thinking of that *country* they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But they were longing for a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. *Yes*, he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac will your descendants be called." 19 *Abraham* took into account that God was able to raise *him* even from the dead. And he received him back from there, figuratively speaking.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau

settle down in this one. Compare 1 Pet 2:11. Believers now are to have the same outlook. Their lasting possessions and their citizenship are in heaven (10:34; Matt 6:19,20; Phil 3:20). By faith they understand this and rejoice in the fact that this world is not their home, that they are only passing through it on their way to the city of God in heaven (12:22; Gal 4:26; Rev 21:2).

11:11,12 Gen 15:4-6; 21:1-5; Rom 4:18-21. It is certain that Abraham believed God's promise that he and Sarah his wife would have descendants. But in Genesis when God promised He would give a son to Abraham and Sarah, nothing is said about Sarah's faith. See Gen 18:10-15. According to the writer to the Hebrews later on she too believed God's promise. Together they illustrate the connection between faith and fruitfulness, or faith and seeming impossibilities (Matt 17:20).

11:13 They all illustrate the faith which perseveres to the end (10:39).

"Strangers and pilgrims" – not just Abraham (vs 9,10), but all believers the writer has named had the same understanding, the same outlook. Things hoped for, things unseen (v 1) were the great objects of their thoughts, desires, and belief.

11:17-19 Gen 22:1-19. Several aspects of faith are seen in this event – faith and victory in trial, faith obedient in a time of perplexity, faith and resurrection, faith and the infallibility of God's promises. For the fulfillment of God's promise in Gen 21:12, Isaac had to live. Abraham believed that if he had to sacrifice Isaac, then God would raise him from death; that God would fulfill His promise regardless of appearances to the contrary. True faith perseveres in spite of circumstances and appearances. It lays hold of the fact that God cannot lie and reasons in His favor.

11:20 Gen 27:27-40. This illustrates the con-

concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was about to die, mentioned the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* an exceptional child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24 By faith Moses, after he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to suffer ill-treatment with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time, 26 considering reproach for Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had fixed his eyes on the giving of the reward.

27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king. And he patiently endured, as *though* he saw him who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry *land*. The Egyptians, trying to do this, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho collapsed, after they were encircled for seven days.

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab did not perish with those who refused to believe, since she had peacefully received the spies.

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David, and Samuel, and the prophets, 33 who through faith subdued

nection between faith and things hoped for (v 1).

11:22 Gen 49:1-28; 50:24,25. Both Jacob and Joseph illustrate faith that goes on until death still sure about things God promised for the future (v 13). Jacob's faith actually shone brightest at the end of his life. True faith does not "draw back" even in the hour of dying (10:39). Were the Hebrews who received this letter tempted to forsake this faith because of difficulties? Let them look to their ancestors. Through what troubles and trials they came! But each one endured to the end. This is what God enables true faith to do.

11:23 Ex 1:22; 2:2; Acts 7:20. They believed God and so were not afraid of the king's orders. Strong faith overcomes fear - 13:6; Matt 8:26; Mark 4:40; Acts 4:13. They illustrate faith working in behalf of children. Compare v 7; Acts 17:31.

11:24-26 Ex 2:11-13; Acts 7:23-26. Moses at the age of forty made the choice between Egypt and God. Choosing Egypt would mean worldly power, wealth, and pleasure. Choosing God meant to give all that up, and to suffer with God's people who were then slaves in Egypt. Moses chose God and let everything else go. He could do this because he had faith, and faith helps men to put the proper value on things. Faith is sure that the future unseen things of God are of far more worth than all the world can offer. Compare Phil 3:7,8.

Moses illustrates the connection between faith and renunciation. See 10:34; Luke 14:33; 18:28-30; Matt 4:18-22; 10:37-39; 16:24-28. True faith will always be willing to give up everything for Christ. Those who are not willing, though they may say they have faith and though others may think they have faith, actually are without true Bible faith. Then what shall we say of those Christians who reject the way of Moses and Paul, refuse to suffer for Christ, and go after the pleasures, wealth and power of this world? They have a profound need to learn this

great truth - disgrace for Christ's sake is of greater value than the treasures of the world (v 26; 13:13; Acts 5:41; 1 Pet 4:12-16).

11:27 "Not fearing" - Ex 2:14 says Moses was afraid that his acts mentioned in vs 11,12 had become known. He must have realized this would cause further trouble to his people Israel. Evidently he feared for them, not for himself. He left Egypt "by faith", not by fear. True faith is always based on some word from God. Moses left Egypt because he knew God was telling him to do so. He persevered in faith (10:39), and he "saw" Him who is invisible (v 1; 2 Cor 4:18). Faith gives spiritual sight to men.

11:28 See Ex 12:1-30. Here is faith and deliverance from God's judgment. Compare v 7; 9:27,28; 1 Cor 5:7.

11:29 See Ex 14:15-31. Here is faith and deliverance from enemies.

11:30 See Josh 6:12-20. Here is faith and taking what God has promised (compare Josh 1:3; 1 John 5:14,15; Mark 11:24).

11:31 See Josh 2:1-21; 6:24,25. Here is faith triumphing over great sin and ignorance and delivering from God's curse (compare Gal 3:10-14; John 5:24).

"Refused to believe" - or "were disobedient" - the Greek word can indicate either or both. See John 3:36.

11:32 The writer would have given many other illustrations from the Old Testament, but it was not necessary. He has shown what true faith is and what it does. Now he groups together a number of heroes of faith and shows how their faith worked, obtained, and persevered (note on v 4).

11:33-38 These verses give ten things OT believers accomplished and eight things they endured. Their certainty about unseen things enabled them to accomplish what they did, and their confidence about things hoped for enabled them to endure what they endured.

11:33 "Kingdoms" - Num 21:23-35; Josh 12:7-24; 2 Sam 8:1-14.

"Obtained promises" - the many promises God gave in the Old Testament were

kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, became strong in weakness, became valiant in battle, and put to flight foreign armies.

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. And others were tortured, refusing deliverance, that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 And others experienced trials of cruel mockings and beatings, yes, and bonds and imprisonment. 37 They underwent stoning, they were sawed in two, were tempted, were killed with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, ill-treated, and tormented 38 (of whom the world was not worthy). They

given because there was someone there (often not many) to believe them.

"Lions" – Dan 6:16-22.

11:34 "Fire" – Dan 3:19-27.

"Sword" – 1 Sam 17:45-50.

"Became strong" – Jud 6:15; 7:7,8; 16:21,28-30; 2 Chron 14:11; Isa 40:31. Compare 2 Cor 12:9,10.

11:35 "Received back their dead" – 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37.

"Refusing deliverance" – they did not accept deliverance if it meant compromise with wickedness and unbelief.

"A better resurrection" – the future resurrection to eternal life, which is far better than being raised from the dead as the sons of the above two women were.

11:36 "Imprisonment" – Gen 39:20; Jer 37:15,16; 38:6.

11:37 "Stoning" – Matt 23:37.

"Sawed in two" – according to tradition this is how Isaiah died.

"Were tempted" – this is certainly true of those heroes of the faith, and of all believers since then. Many of us may not face other things listed in these verses, but all of us will be put to the test by various temptations.

"Destitute, ill-treated and tormented" – words that often describe the best people on earth in every era. Compare John 15:18-21; 16:2,3,33; Rom 8:35-37; 1 Cor 4:11-13.

11:38 The world treated them as if they were not worthy of it. But the reverse was true. They could find no sure home on earth, but God prepared one for them in heaven.

11:39,40 "A good commendation" – v 2.

"The things of promise" – vs 10,16. The writer is referring to the promised blessings Christ would bring, the eternal inheritance – 1:14; 6:12; 9:15.

"Some better thing" – this includes all the better things we can see in this letter – 7:19; 8:6; 9:23. God's plan was (and is) that believers who lived before Christ, and those who have believed since He came, should be "made perfect" together. Christ's sacrifice was as much for them as for us, and is the only way anyone can ever be made perfect – 10:14; Rom 3:25,26. The final

wandered in deserts, and mountains, and *in dens* and caves of the earth.

39 And all of these, *though* they gained a good commendation through faith, did not receive the *things of promise*. 40 God had provided some better thing for us, so that they, apart from us, would not be made perfect.

12 Therefore since we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside *every weight*, and the sin that so easily adheres *to us*, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross,

perfection will come at the return of Christ – Rom 8:23-30; 1 Cor 15:50-53; 1 Thess 4:15-17; 1 John 3:2.

12:1,2 Here we have a crowd of witnesses (the believers of chapter 11), hindrances to be avoided (sins, etc), a necessary principle of the race we are running (patient endurance), and a great model to look at (Jesus). The writer implies that there will be a great prize at the end of the race.

"Witnesses" – the Greek word means those who testify to something they have seen or experienced. The English word "martyr" is derived from this word. Everywhere we turn in the Bible these witnesses appear. They look at us from the pages of Scripture and testify to us. They tell us the life of faith is a good one, that the rewards are great, that it is possible to overcome every obstacle.

"Every weight" – what runner ever goes into a race loaded down with weights? In the race of faith a weight is any thing that slows us down, or distracts us, or hinders us, or makes running more difficult, or takes away our determination to win. It may be laziness, or worldliness, or lack of discipline, or discouragement, or any of a great number of things. The worst hindrance of all is sin. And there seems to be a specific sin the writer warns about – "the sin that so easily ensnares us." It seems likely that he is referring to unbelief (though some think he is referring to all sin). Unbelief is surely the greatest hindrance of all in the race believers run. And it barks at the heels of all who are running in faith for the goal.

"Patient endurance" – an emphasis all through this letter – 3:6,12-14; 4:11; 6:11,12; 10:36.

"Race" – compare 1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 3:13,14; 2 Tim 4:7.

12:2 "Looking to Jesus" – Jesus is in heaven, but by faith we can fix our eyes on Him (11:1,27; 2 Cor 4:18).

"Author" – if we have faith He is the one who produced it in us (Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29).

"Finisher" – or "perfecter" or "completer." Jesus is the one who will see that our faith becomes more and more complete and that it goes on until the day we see Him face to

despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him who endured such opposition from sinners against himself, or else you may grow weary and faint in your minds. 4 You have not yet resisted to *the shedding of your* blood, fighting against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to children,

My son, do not scorn the discipline of the Lord,

face (10:39; Luke 22:32; Phil 1:6). He finishes what He begins.

"Joy" – how could Jesus endure 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:5,10? Joy awaited Him on the other side (Ps 16:11). What was this joy? Perhaps the joy of pleasing God the Father and finishing His work (John 4:34). Perhaps the joy of seeing many sons brought to glory (2:10), of opening the way for sinners to obtain eternal salvation (Luke 15:7,10).

"Shame" – dying by crucifixion was the worst kind of public disgrace.

"Sat down" – 10:12; 1:3.

12:3 In the life of faith Jesus is the believer's best example (1 Pet 2:21-23). Filling our minds with thoughts of Him gives great encouragement in the race believers must run. See also 3:1; Col 3:12.

"Opposition" – Matt 9:3,34; 12:14,24; 21:23,46; 22:15; 26:3,4,14-16, 47-50, 65-68; 27:20-23, 27-31, 35-44.

12:4 The life of faith is not only like a race; it is a warfare (Eph 6:10-18; 2 Tim 2:3; 4:7). Sin is the enemy. It fights believers from within as well as from without (1 John 1:8; Rom 7:17,18). To give up the fight against it invites disaster.

12:5-13 Though they had not yet died for their faith (v 4), they had suffered in many ways (10:32-34). Unbelieving Jews would have told them that this was because God was displeased with them, that He was punishing them for abandoning the old ways. The writer wanted to encourage those believers. He wanted them to understand that troubles and hardships in the lives of believers were a sign of God's love, not His displeasure. God was disciplining or chastising them because they were His children and He was seeking their highest good. We can learn here five truths about chastisement (training by discipline or punishment).

First, it is inescapable for believers. God disciplines "every son" He receives (v 6).

Second, the method God uses is painful. It is like a whipping. This results in pain, not pleasure (v 11). "Uses a whip" – or "flogs" – this is the meaning of the Greek word. It is used in Matt 10:17; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:33. Of course, God Himself does not use a literal whip on us, but his chastisement and discipline may feel to our hearts and minds and spirits as a literal whip does to the body. And human beings may

or become faint-hearted when you are rebuked by him.

6 For whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and whips every son whom he receives.

7 If you are patiently enduring discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons. For is there a son whom the father does not discipline? 8 But if you are not undergoing discipline, in which all *sons* have a share, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Moreover, we have had human fathers

beat us with literal whips which God may use as a means of discipline for us.

Third, this discipline is a sign. It shows that those who receive it are God's children. It is evidence that He is taking them into His special care. He loves them as an ideal father should, and therefore trains them (v 8). Some think "if God loved us He would not treat us like He does." But He treats us like He does just because He loves us.

Fourth, God's disciplining us has a wonderful purpose – our good, our holiness (v 10).

Fifth, it has a good result to those who patiently endure (v 7) and submit (v 9) and are exercised by it (v 11).

There are three possible ways to respond to God's discipline or "whipping." People may "scorn it" – disregard it or reject it; or become "faint-hearted" under it; or submit to God and be trained by it. The choice is either rejection, dejection, or subjection. The writer does not tell us what methods God uses to discipline us. But did he not have in mind such things as he had already listed in 10:32-34; 11:35-38? See also 1 Cor 11:29-32; 2 Cor 12:7-10; 1 Pet 1:6,7. Compare Ps 66:10-12, and see psalm 73 where a man of God described his experiences while under discipline.

12:5,6 Prov 3:11,12. See also Job 5:17; Ps 94:12; 119:67,71,75.

12:7,8 True believers often seem to meet with more trials and difficulties than others (see Ps 73:2-14). Here is the reason for it. God is dealing with them as sons. A person who considers himself a Christian should not worry if God is disciplining him, only if God is not. God does not discipline Satan's children. His anger rests on them, He punishes them, and will judge them one by one at the proper time.

12:9 "Human fathers" – Prov 13:24; 18:18; 22:15; 23:13,14.

"Respect" – when parents discipline and punish their children in love, children understand and respect them for it. If they do not discipline them well, the children may wonder whether their parents really love them.

"Father of spirits" – the only time this phrase appears in the Bible (a similar phrase appears in Num 16:22; 27:16). It seems by it the writer is contrasting earthly fathers and the Heavenly Father. They chastise the bodies of their children; he deals chiefly with

who disciplined *us*, and we showed *them* respect. Much more then should we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they indeed disciplined *us* for a few days, as they thought best, but he *disciplines us for our good*, so that *we* might share in his holiness. 11 Now no discipline seems joyful at the time, but painful. However, afterwards it produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it.

12 Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, the spirits of His children.

12:10 "Good" - Rom 8:28.

"Holiness" - God wants His children to be separated more and more from the world with its moral filthiness (2 Cor 6:17), to get complete victory in their "struggle against sin" (v 4), and to become more and more pure in heart (Matt 5:8). He disciplines, chastises, and punishes them with this end in view. Welcome troubles and trials when they bring such a result! What are a few pains if they help to purify us and make us share more completely in God's holiness?

Observe here how God goes about enabling His children to share His holiness - it is not by giving us a once-for-all extraordinary experience. He carries on His work of disciplining, and no doubt carries on with it until we leave this world.

For some other benefits of the troubles which come to believers see the note at Job 3:20.

12:11 Here is a "harvest" all believers desire (Matt 5:6). Then they should welcome the means God uses to produce it - discipline, chastisement, punishment.

"Exercised by it" or "trained by it" - when troubles and sufferings come it is very possible to feel sorry for ourselves, or to fall into discouragement. Instead we should be "exercised." That is, we should learn to examine ourselves, seek the reason for God's chastisement, and correct ourselves. Compare Lam 3:40.

12:12-16 "Therefore" - in view of what he has been saying about God's discipline, he now urges believers to actively respond to it all. We should do 4 things: "strengthen" (v 12), "make straight paths" (v 13), "follow" (v 14), "take care" (v 15). If God's discipline is to produce the desired effects, we must actively cooperate with Him, and not merely passively endure it.

12:12 "Strengthen" - how can anyone properly run the race (v 1) if he lets his knees buckle and arms hang down? God has strength for us in Christ, and we must learn to use it. See Ps 29:11; 73:26; 105:4; Eph 1:18,19; 6:10; Col 1:11,12,29.

12:13 "Make straight paths" - to run best we need straight and level ground. It is up to us to see that we have it. We are not going to win if we let crookedness into our lives.

"Feet. . .healed" - Prov 4:25-27. There is healing in God's way of discipline if we submit to it. Sadly, many Christians are trying to run the race with lame feet.

and *strengthen* the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be turned aside, but healed instead.

14 Follow peace with everyone, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. 15 Watch carefully so that no one misses out on the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springs up to trouble *you*, and defiles many, 16 and that there may not *be* any sexually immoral or ungodly person like Esau, who sold his birthright for one meal.

12:14 "Follow" - once more we see that our personal effort is involved. We must not dream of passively drifting through life.

"Peace" - Matt 5:9; Rom 12:18.

"Holiness" - v 10. Holiness requires effort, much effort (Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5:16-18; Eph 4:22-32; Col 3:5; Heb 12:4,10-13; 1 Pet 1:13-16; 2 Pet 1:5-8). Holiness has to be pursued as if it were of great value (which it is).

"See the Lord" - holiness is an absolute essential (Matt 5:8; 1 Cor 6:9-11). Those who live according to the world, the flesh, and the devil, calling themselves Christians, and hoping to be received into God's holy heaven, are going to meet with a terrible surprise. Notes on holiness at Lev 20:8; John 17:17-19; etc.

12:15 "Take care" - it is possible that some people in any church are missing out on the grace of God - compare 2 Cor 6:1; Gal 5:4,7. The writer is continuing with the subject of holiness. He knows that the only way anyone can become holy is by the grace of God, and that if a person does not take care he may miss out on this one way. If that happens roots of bitterness can spring up in the heart and in the church. If care is not taken the fruit of such a root in any church can be as bitter as the root - quarreling, factions, evil speaking, seeking revenge, etc. And so it will defile many. This was actually happening to some extent in the Corinthian and Galatian churches.

12:16 There are many things we must watch out for in the churches. Everywhere in the Bible we see dreadful possibilities of going in the wrong way.

"Esau" - see Gen 25:24-34. He is an example of those who miss out on the grace of God. Observe here why Esau did not value the birthright and the promises of God which went along with it.

"Ungodly" - the Greek word also means "profane", "common", "base." Esau was the kind of person who has no interest in spiritual things. He is an example of those who are of "the flesh", who set their minds on what the flesh wants (Rom 8:5-8), who try to please themselves, not God. Are there not many in our churches today, and among the leaders of our churches, who are like Esau - immoral, profane, and for base gain willing to sell their spiritual birthright? Unless there is a radical change in their lives such people will end up as Esau did - rejected. Compare Mal 1:3.

17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to receive the blessing, he was rejected. Though he earnestly sought it with tears, he found no place for a change of mind.

18 For you have not come to the mountain that was touchable and that burned with fire, or to blackness and darkness and storm, 19 or to the sound of a trumpet and the sound of words (*the sound was such* that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them; 20 for they could not bear what was commanded: "And if even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned, or pierced with a spear." 21 And the sight was so terrible *that* Moses said, "I am very afraid, and trembling").

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

12:17 "Afterwards" – Gen 27:30-40.

"Change of mind" – this probably means he tried to get his father to change his mind about the blessing he had given to Jacob, but was not successful. Some think that this means that Esau himself tried to repent but was unable to do so, but this seems unlikely. The Greek word translated "repentance" in the KJV literally means a change of mind.

12:18 "For" – this word does not connect what follows with v 17, but with the theme of the first part of this chapter – patiently enduring God's discipline and being trained by it. This is the happy privilege of believers because they are not under the old covenant and law (vs 18-21), but under the new covenant of grace (vs 22-24). Compare vs 18-24 with Gal 4:24-26.

"You have not come" – as believers in Christ they were no longer under the law - Rom 6:14, and believers are not to look to the old covenant as a way of salvation or of fellowship with God.

"The mountain" – Mount Sinai. The description in this verse and the next two is based on Exodus 19:16-19; 20:18-21 and Deut 4:11.

12:19-20 All this indicates that the giving of the law was a fearful thing. See the notes on Exodus chapter 19.

12:21 The words of Moses recorded here are not found anywhere else in the Bible. The Holy Spirit, who knew what Moses said, by some means revealed it to the writer of this letter.

12:22 "You have come to Mount Zion" – the writer now shows some of the blessed results of faith in Christ and being under the new covenant Christ established. He speaks of the heavenly Mount Zion, the spiritual realities of which the earthly city was only a shadow.

"Heavenly Jerusalem" – Gal 4:26; Rev 21:10.

12:23 "General assembly" – in Greek this is one word and indicates either a general assembly of the people (rather than a restricted meeting of leaders), or a meeting for worship or for a public festival.

an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose *names* are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks of better things than *that of* Abel.

25 See that you do not refuse him who speaks. For if those who refused him who spoke on earth did not escape, *it is* much more *certain that we will not escape*, if we turn away from him who *speaks* from heaven. 26 His voice then shook the earth, but now he has spoken this promise:

Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but heaven also.

27 And this *word*, "Yet once more," indicates

"The firstborn" – in Greek the word is in the plural indicating "firstborn ones." Who are these? The best answer seems to be: Those who through faith are united to Him who is the great Firstborn – see Rom 8:29; Col 1:15,18; Rev 1:5.

"Written in heaven" – Luke 10:20; Rev 21:27.

"Judge" – Ps 50:4-6; 96:13; Isa 33:22; Acts 17:31; Rom 2:16.

"Spirits of righteous men made perfect" – those who have already died in faith, perfected by the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10:10,14), and made without blemish or fault in the presence of God.

12:24 "Jesus the mediator" – 8:6; 9:15; 1 Tim 2:5. Through Him, and through Him alone, we can approach the holy God of the universe – 10:19-22.

"New covenant" – 8:8-13; Matt 26:26-28.

"Blood of sprinkling" – 9:14; 10:22; 1 Pet 1:2.

"Abel" – Gen 4:10. Abel's blood cried out for punishment and vengeance on the one who had shed it. Christ's blood speaks of redemption and forgiveness – Eph 1:7. In vs 18-24 the writer has shown in vivid language how much better the new covenant is than the old. The old spoke of fear and punishment, the new speaks of mercy and access to God and eternal blessing.

12:25-29 Here is the last warning against apostasy in this letter (2:1-4; 3:7-19; 6:4-8; 10:26-31). It is against refusing God's revelation of the new covenant.

12:25 The one who speaks is God (1:1,2).

"Earth" – God spoke through Moses at Mount Sinai.

"Heaven" – God speaking through His own Son is as if He spoke directly from heaven (John 1:18; 8:23; 12:49,50). Those who refused God's Word through Moses did not escape. Much less will anyone escape who refuses Christ's Word (2:3; 10:28,29; John 12:48).

"If" – see 6:6; 10:26.

12:26 "Shook the earth" – Ex 19:18.

"Heaven" – Hag 2:6.

12:27 See 1:10-12; Rev 6:12-14; 21:1.

the removal of those things that are shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Since, therefore, we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace so that we can serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, 29 for our God *is* a consuming fire.

13 Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not for get to entertain strangers, for by doing so some have unknowingly entertained angels. 3 Remember those who are in bonds, as though bound with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body.

4 Marriage *is* honourable among all, and the *marriage* bed is undefiled, but God will judge the

Sometime in the future the material creation will pass away, but God's kingdom, the perfection that has come through the new covenant, the things listed in vs 22-24 - these cannot be shaken.

12:28 "Kingdom" - notes at Matt 4:17; Rom 14:17.

"Godly fear" - Gen 20:11; Job 28:28; Ps 34:11-14; 90:11; 111:10; Prov 1:7. Without reverence and awe and godly fear there is no wisdom and no worship acceptable to God.

12:29 "Fire" - note at Ex 3:2. A "consuming fire" suggests fiery holiness that will destroy everything that is contrary to it. The judgment that will come on unbelievers, and those who forsake God and refuse His voice, will be very terrible indeed. Compare 2 Thess 1:7,8.

13:1 John 13:34; Rom 12:10; 13:8; etc.

13:2 Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9; 3 John 5-8.

"Angels" - Gen 18:2,22; 19:1-3. Angels sometimes appear in the form of men. Only if we show hospitality to strangers will there ever be any opportunity of having one in our home.

13:3 Luke 6:31; Rom 12:15; Matt 25:34-40. Love can enable us to put ourselves in the place of others and experience and show compassion.

13:4 "Honourable" - Christians should count marriage an honorable thing because God has ordained it (Matt 19:4-6).

"God will judge the sexually immoral" - Rev 21:8; Col 3:5,6; Eph 5:3-6; 1 Cor 6:9,10.

13:5 "Be without the love of money" - this is the meaning of the Greek words here, and it is a very important exhortation indeed. The love of money is ruinous. See 1 Tim 6:9,10; Matt 6:19,20,24; Luke 12:15-21; 16:14; John 12:4-6.

"Be content" - Luke 3:14; Phil 4:12; 1 Tim 6:6-8.

"I will never leave you" - Deut 31:6; Matt 28:20; John 14:16. The presence of God with us is far better than all the wealth of the world. If He is with us He will supply what we need (Matt 6:25-34; Phil 4:19), and by His presence in us we can learn contentment in

sexually immoral, and adulterers.

5 *Your* manner of life *must be* without *the* love of money. *So be* content with what you have, for he has said,

I will never leave you or forsake you.

6 So that we may boldly say,

The Lord *is* my helper,
and I will not fear what man will do to me.

7 Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you, and follow their faith, considering the final result of *their* manner of life.

8 Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.

9 Do not be carried away with various strange

all circumstances. But if believers sin will not God forsake them? Since He says He never will forsake them, then He never will. This does not mean they are free to sin. On the contrary, it makes them free to be holy (Rom 6:1,2; 15:18). But can't believers forsake Him? They do not want to, and they do not (10:39; John 10:27. Though some who claim to be believers, and are not, do want to and actually do so). Even if true believers tried to do so, which they will not, it would be most difficult (see Ps 139:7-12).

13:6 See Ps 118:6,7; Rom 8:31; Matt 10:28-31; Ps 27:1-3. Men had already done much against them (10:32-34), but fear of men was to have no place in their lives. Whatever men could do was temporary. If God was with them they had a blessed eternity awaiting them. Compare 2 Cor 4:17,18.

13:7 "Leaders" - he is probably referring to those who first preached the gospel to them.

"Imitate" - 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7,9.

13:8 Human leaders live and die, come and go. Christ is always the same (1:12) and His ministry as the great High Priest of His people will remain the same (7:24,25). Of course, the principal point here is that there will be no change in His character or in His loving care for His people. He will be forever what He was in eternity past and in Old Testament days and during His life on earth in the body.

This does not mean that He will enable believers now to exercise all the gifts and signs that the apostles exercised (believers in Old Testament days did not do so and Jesus was the same then, and believers in the eternal ages will not do so - see 1 Cor 13:8-10 - and Jesus will be the same then). In the past at special times He manifested Himself in special ways, and in different ages emphasized different aspects of His divine being, but in His character and qualities Jesus will remain forever what He has always been. This is the subject here.

13:9 "Strange doctrines" - Eph 4:14; Rom 16:17; Acts 20:20; Matt 7:15. Evidently the writer had in mind some strange Jewish teachings about the spiritual value of cer-

doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods, which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. 10 We have an altar, and those who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat there. 11 For the bodies of those animals, the blood of which is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.

12 So Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 Therefore let us go to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For here have we no lasting city, but we seek one to come.

15 Therefore let us offer through him the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share *what you have*,

emotional foods (compare Rom 14:2,14,21; 1 Cor 8:8; Col 2:8,16-23. See notes on Lev 11:2-23). It is only God's grace that can nourish the spiritual life, not physical things.

13:10 "An altar" – believers in Christ have no visible, material altar. The writer is speaking of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Those who receive Christ by faith have spiritual food, not ceremonial food (see John 6:53-58,63). And those who serve in the old Jewish system and refuse Christ and the new covenant have no part in this "altar."

13:11 He refers to the Day of Atonement – 9:7. See Lev 16:27. No one could eat the flesh of the animals sacrificed that day. And certainly no one can eat the literal flesh of Christ sacrificed for us. It is unthinkable.

13:12 "Sanctify" – "make holy" or "set apart" or "consecrate" – 10:10. This is what the blood of Christ does for believers.

"Outside the gate" – the place of the cross (called Golgotha or Calvary) was outside the city of Jerusalem (Matt 27:32,33).

13:13 "Outside the camp" – he means outside the camp of the Jewish religion, outside the system of the old covenant.

"Reproach" – or "defamation" or "disgrace" – 12:2. Convicted criminals were crucified on crosses. If we go to Christ accepting His death in our place we are acknowledging that we are sinners worthy of death. Believers are the crucified people of a crucified Saviour (Gal 6:14), and must not be ashamed to say so.

13:14 "City" – 11:10,16; 12:22.

13:15,16 The old covenant had priests who offered sacrifices. Here the writer indicates that now all believers in Christ are the priests of the new covenant. See 1 Pet 2:5,9; Rev 1:6. Their offering is not animals, not any material things on any material altar, but something far better.

"Praise" – notes and references at Ps 33:1-3.

"Do good" – this is a very important part of the ministry of believers as New Testament priests. See Matt 5:16; 25:34-40; Luke 6:27,35; Rom 12:21; 2 Cor 9:8; Gal

for God is very pleased with such sacrifices.

17 Obey your leaders and be submissive, for they watch over your souls, as those who must give *an* account. See that they are able to do so with joy, and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

18 Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a good conscience, and are willing to live honorably in every way. 19 But especially I urge *you* to do this so that I may be restored to you more quickly.

20 Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom

6:10; Col 1:10; 2 Thess 2:17; Jam 1:27; 1 Pet 2:12.

"Share what you have" – Matt 5:42; Rom 12:13; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 6:18; 1 John 3:17. God is pleased with offerings like these. Compare 10:6. See Rom 12:1 for another offering that pleases Him very much.

13:17 "Leaders" – churches must have leaders, and leaders must have some authority. Their authority comes from God who appoints them. The writer was convinced that these leaders of these Hebrews Christians were good ones. Not all leaders are good, and none should be obeyed who do not live according to the truth God has revealed (compare Acts 4:19; 5:29), or who give commands not in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament. Good church leaders "keep watch" over the members – Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-4.

"An account" – church leaders will have to give account not only of their personal lives but of their leadership over God's people.

13:18 "A good conscience" – 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2.

13:19 Compare Rom 15:30-32; Philemon 22.

13:20 "God of peace" – 7:2; Rom 15:33; 16:20; 2 Thess 3:16.

"From the dead" – Matt 28:6. This is the only place in this letter where the writer speaks of Christ's resurrection. But several times he implies it – 1:3; 2:9; 10:12,13.

"Blood of the everlasting covenant" – 9:12; 10:29; Matt 26:28. Here the new covenant is called "everlasting." There will be no need for another one to replace it. It accomplishes forever what God has purposed for His people.

13:21 This is what God can do for every believer, and what no believer can do for himself. If God does not equip us we will never be equipped, and if He does not work in us, our activities will never please Him. Compare 2 Cor 3:5; Phil 2:13; Col 1:29. The aim of every believer should be exactly the same as that of the Lord Jesus (Matt 26:39; John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29) – the will of God – nothing less, nothing more, nothing

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be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 And I urge you, brethren, bear with *this* word of exhortation, for I have written a letter to you in few words.

23 Know that *our* brother Timothy is set at else. God works this in believers "through" Jesus Christ. He is the one channel of God's grace and power.

13:22 "Exhortation" - the doctrinal truths the writer presented were mixed with frequent exhortations. Often he says "therefore" and "let us" - v 13,15; 2:1; 4:1,11,14,16; 6:1; 10:19,22,23,24;

liberty. If he arrives shortly, I will *come* with him *and* see you.

24 Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

25 Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

12:1,28. His reason for writing was practical, and he gave them deep truth that they might put it into practice and have deep spiritual lives.

13:23 "Timothy" - Acts 16:1. Evidently he had been in prison.

13:25 "Grace" - notes at John 1:14,16; Rom 1:7; 2 Cor 8:9; etc