

HEBREWS

Dr. Jeffrey Wehr

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Dr Jeffrey Wehr
Jeff_wehr21@yahoo.com

Introduction

The disciples came to Jesus “to show Him the buildings of the temple.” Matthew 24:1. Jesus said to them, “Se ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Matthew 24:2. Jesus predicted the fall of the temple, all of which came true in 70 AD, when the Romans would come and destroy both the city and the temple.

Many in the early church had hoped that Jesus would have already come. In fact, some were teaching that Jesus was coming back immediately. But Paul would write, “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming [the Second Coming] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day [the Second Coming] of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Second Coming of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first [in the church], and that man of sin [antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God [acting as if he had the power and authority of God within the church]. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8.

Paul knew that Christ would not return until there was a falling away first in the church. This falling away would tragically produce the antichrist power. Antichrist would precede the Second Coming of Christ. The power that was “withholding” the “man of sin” [antichrist] was the pagan Roman empire. When the pagan Rome would fall, the antichrist power would take her place. She would rule for 1,260 years, and then Christ would come.

But another important piece of information was necessary to help the early church to understand that the coming of the Lord was not immediate. After Christ would be crucified and resurrected, He would ascend into heaven to perform a special work on behalf of God’s people. Jesus would ascend into heaven as our High Priest and perform his perfect work in the heavenly sanctuary, of which the earthly sanctuary was but a copy. Christ would serve as both lamb and priest before His Second Coming.

The book of Hebrews was written to help us understand the work Jesus is doing for us now as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. It clearly describes the work of Jesus since His ascension. For many Christians, they know that Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, but they do not know exactly the work that Jesus is performing. The book of Hebrews will describe to us the all-important work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. As it is written, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the

heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”
Hebrews 8:1, 2

Prior to the destruction of the earthly temple, God desired to draw the attention of the early believers to the heavenly sanctuary. With the early church being predominantly Jewish in origin, it seemed necessary for this inspired book to be written. After all, what might have happened to the early believers if the early temple was destroyed with no clear understanding of the heavenly sanctuary above? This inspired book was designed to bring great encourage to every believer to know that in the sanctuary above there is a high priest who “ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 7:25.

In establishing the work of Jesus as the High Priest of the Christian faith, Paul is inspired to first establish the divinity of Jesus in chapter one, and then establish the humanity of Jesus in chapter two. It is the divinity and humanity of Jesus that makes Him the one and only mediator between God and man. As Paul wrote, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5.

Let us now begin a wonderful journey in understanding the work of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews Chapter One

The Divinity of Jesus

1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Paul does not begin by introducing himself, but begins with God as the author of the whole of Scripture. Paul tells us that God spoke in “time past” throughout the Old Testament, unto our forefathers “by the prophets.” At “sundry times” God revealed His will little by little for more than a thousand years. From the time of Moses to the last Old Testament prophet, God kept increasing the light of truth to His people. This light of truth came in “diver manners” through prophecies, laws, psalms, proverbs, and true life stories.

1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Now in “these last days,” at the time of the Savior’s first advent, God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. It was through His Son that the Father “made the worlds.” The Son was not His tool, but the Father’s co-Creator in creating the entire universe.

When Jesus left heaven to become a man, He took off His kingly robes to put on human flesh as the Sacrifice for the sins of humanity. After Jesus died, He arose and ascended into heaven to resume His rightful place next to the Father. And now the Father has “appointed” His Son as “heir of all things.”

1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Jesus is the “brightness” of the Father’s “glory.” The glory of the Father is His perfect character, and the Son is the brilliant outshining of the Father’s character. Jesus, though a distinct personality, is the “express image” of the Father’s moral being. Jesus is not a physical copy of the Father outwardly, but He is the perfect reflection of the Father’s inmost nature. As Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” John 14:9. “I and my Father are one.” John 10:30. Jesus came in our flesh and blood to give a true representation of the character of God the Father. It has been Satan’s mission to misrepresent the character of God.

Jesus, the Son of God, not only was a co-Creator with the Father, but He also upholds “all things by the word of his power.” In Colossians 1:17, we learn that through Christ “all things consist.” In other words, Christ not only holds things together, but He sustains them with a purpose to carry out the will of His Father.

Jesus “by himself purged our sins” as He trod the wine press alone. See Isaiah 63:3. His ability to purge is twofold. First, through the power of His blood, He is able to forgive us of our sins. Secondly, through the power of His resurrection we are able to be purged from all sin. As Christ’s sacrifice paid the penalty for our sins, His ever-present intercession on our behalf purifies us from sin.

Therefore, Jesus is presently sitting “on the right hand of the Majesty on high” to make intercession for us. As our Advocate in heaven, Jesus pleads His own blood on behalf of every repentant sinner. As our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, He is able to help all who come to Him by faith. See Hebrews 4:14-16; 2:17, 18.

The fact that Jesus is at the “right hand of the Majesty on high,” is proof of His divinity. In establishing Christ’s mediatorial work on behalf of man, Paul first sets out to prove the divinity of Christ. In chapter two, Paul sets out to prove the humanity of Christ. It is due to both His divinity and humanity that Christ is the one and only Mediator between God and man. He is able to represent God to us, and He is able to represent us to the Father. He is the God-man and there is none other.

1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

While Jesus was one with the Father from eternity, He did become a man. When He became a man, He permitted Himself to be made “a little lower than the angels.” Hebrews 2:9. But the fact that He died to atone for the sins of the world proves that He was also God. Only divinity could atone for the sins against

divinity. No angel could have ever atoned for the sins of even one sinner. Therefore, the Son has a “more excellent name than” the angels. In fact, since He is the Son of the Father, He would by nature be higher than the angels. And since He is “heir of all things,” His inheritance would place Him well above the angels.

Paul’s argument is that Jesus is not only more than a man, but that He is much higher than the highest angel. After all, He created the angels.

1:5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Now some may think that Jesus is a powerful angel. But did God ever say to an angel “Thou art my Son”? Absolutely not! The title “Son” is given but to One, and that One is Jesus.

What does it mean, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”? According to Psalm 2:7 and Acts 13:33, Christ was begotten at both His incarnation and resurrection. Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, lived a life that showed us the Father, which culminated in His glorious resurrection.

As a dutiful Son, Jesus came to protect the name of His Father against Satan’s accusations. The Father loved His Son, but He also loved us, and gave us His only begotten Son to die for our sins, that we may enjoy His presence for eternity.

1:6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

So much higher is the position of the Son that the angels are to worship Him. It was in God’s plan to save humanity that His Son would become a man. Jesus would be the “firstborn” among many brethren. Romans 8:29. Though Jesus has always been the Son of God, whether before His incarnation, in human flesh, or since His resurrection, Jesus is the “first begotten.” Because of Him, we are able to become members of the family of God, whereby Jesus is not ashamed to call us “brethren.” Hebrews 2:11.

1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

While the Son is the Savior of man, the angels are ministering spirits to help the human family. Jesus Himself will order His angels to gather the saints from around the world at His Second Coming. See Matthew 24:31.

As “a flame of fire,” angels bring light from heaven above to this darkened world. They are servants in the truest sense, who love to serve God without hesitation to bring love and light to our little world.

1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

In contrast to the angels, the Father says to the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.” There could be no higher proof of Christ’s deity than to be so addressed by the Father.

Not only is the plan of salvation dependent upon the divinity of Jesus, but also upon His righteousness. If Jesus is not fully divine, then He could not be our Redeemer. If Jesus did not live a righteous life then we are without hope of a perfect sacrifice for our sins. And if Christ’s own kingdom is not based upon righteousness, there would be no point in being saved. Who would want to live forever with a sinful and tyrannical god?

1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Jesus was anointed with the “oil of gladness” or the Holy Spirit more than anyone who had put on human flesh. Why? Because He loved righteousness as nobody loved righteousness, and He hated iniquity as nobody hated iniquity. You might say, we receive the Holy Spirit based upon what we love and hate. If I love what Jesus hates, and I hate what Jesus loves, will I receive the Holy Spirit? Obviously not! Our highest goal in life is to be like Jesus. Paul tells us that we are to have the mind of Christ. See Philippians 2:5. Christ has left for us “an example,” that we “should follow in his steps.” 1 Peter 2:21. And if we abide in Him, we will “walk, even as he walked.” 1 John 2:6.

Righteousness is defined by God’s Ten Commandments. Iniquity is the transgression of those Ten Commandments. See 1 John 3:4. Therefore, Jesus received the Holy Spirit “above” His “fellows,” because He loved everything that was in agreement with His Father’s will as expression in God’s ten moral precepts.

1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

In verse 8, Jesus was referred to as “God.” In verse 10, He is referred to as “Lord,” who “laid the foundation of the earth.” Paul has already made reference to Jesus as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and he here again reaffirms that fact. Often times in our Christian experience, we are to reaffirm our faith in all the ways of the Lord, lest we forget. And what could be more important than to reaffirm our faith that Jesus is fully divine, the Creator of both heaven and earth, and that His kingdom is based upon righteousness.

1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

Yet, all that God has made in the heavens and the earth will go through a radical change. For God will create a new heaven and a new earth. See Revelation 21:1. But God remains the same forever, for He is already ultimate perfection. For Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8.

1:12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Over time our clothes wear and must be thrown away. But God is not only loving, caring, and just. He is changeless and immutable. This gives stability to the entire universe. Not only are God's ways everlasting, but He is everlasting.

1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

The Father never said to any of the angels "sit on my right hand." As we saw earlier, He never said to an angel, "Thou art my Son." To the Son alone does the Father share His throne, whereby all others bow in submission.

1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

While the Son is higher than all the angels, these "ministering spirits" play a very important role in the salvation of man. While they cannot atone for the sins of the world, they do go to and fro from heaven to earth to help the human race.

Hebrews Chapter Two

The Humanity of Christ

2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Even though the Old Testament was written for our learning, we need to give heed to the revelation of God's Son. If we fail to understand the divinity, humanity, and mission of Jesus, then we will forfeit the ability to understand Scripture aright.

2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

We know that God spoke the word to Moses and the prophets, but did you know that angels were present at these appointed times? And we know that the law as given by God is sure, for there was a "just recompense" for "every transgression and disobedience."

2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

If those in the Old Testament did not escape “the word spoken by angels,” then how will we escape any neglect to such a great salvation which was “first” spoken by God’s own Son? The answer is, “We will not escape.”

2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

Not only did God’s own Son teach and minister among us, but God bore witness of His Son “with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” There is nothing more that God could have done to convince us of Jesus as the Savior of man.

2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

Jesus not only created the world as we know it, but He will be King of the world to come. And all things will be in subjection to Him, even the angels.

2:6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

When we think of how small man really is in contrast to this vast universe, we are inclined to ask, “Why would God take the time to even visit the human race?” The value of a soul is seen in the cross of Calvary. At infinite cost to Himself, God gave His only begotten Son to die for the rebellious race. This tells us more than anything else how much God thinks about us and cares for us.

2:7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

Even in their perfection, Adam and Eve were made a little lower than the angels. Yet God had crowned the human race by creating them in His image, and did set them to have “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Genesis 1:28

2:8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

It is evident that mankind rules over all of the creatures. Man has made great achievements in the areas of science, even sending a man to the moon. Yet, left to himself, man is powerless to gain self-control over his own sinful nature. He can rule over the animals, but he cannot rule himself. Because of sin, he is subject to death.

2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

In contrast to man losing his dominion due to sin, Christ has dominion because of His sinlessness. We see that Jesus, the Son of God, took on fallen humanity and was Himself “made a little lower than the angels.”

In our fallen flesh Jesus lived a perfect life in obedience to God's Ten Commandments. He became our perfect sacrifice for sin, "suffering" the death that we deserve. He tasted "death for every man," to the fullest extent. In the garden of Gethsemane He drank the bitter cup of all the sins of the world. This is what truly caused the death of God's dear Son. The full weight of our sins crushed out His life. When He rose again and ascending into heaven, He was "crowned with glory and honor."

2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

The Captain of our salvation is Jesus, who is our "merciful and faithful high priest," "able to succor them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:17, 18. Had Christ come and lived in wealth, peace, and protected from all harm and temptation, then He would have not been "tempted like as we are." Hebrews 4:15. Too many questions would have arisen if our salvation was not made "perfect through sufferings." Those tempted with hunger, sickness, and hazards would wonder if Jesus could have successfully endured these things by faith. But Jesus did endure hardship and trials more than all. He is more than familiar with the perils, persecutions, distresses, and discomforts of this life. Therefore, through Him we are more than conquerors no matter the trial.

He who created all things, and "by whom are all things," became man's Substitute that He might bring many "sons unto glory." The Son of God became the Son of man that many might become sons and daughters of God. And it can be equally said that the Father "who created all things by Jesus Christ," willed the sacrifice of His Son that many might become "sons unto glory."

2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

He that "sanctifieth" is Jesus, and those that are "sanctified" are the "sons unto glory." Through Christ we are "all of one," whereby the Father is the Father of us all, for which cause Jesus "is not ashamed to call them brethren."

2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Christ had come in human flesh to declare the righteousness of His Father's character, and to "sing praise" unto Him "in the midst of the church," that many might become part of the family of God. What a loving Son to both His Father and to us, that Christ would leave heaven to help us understand the true nature of the Father and His everlasting kingdom.

2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

Jesus trusted His Father implicitly in becoming a man in this fallen world. In our fallen flesh, Jesus showed us how to put trust in our heavenly Father. To show how trustworthy the Father is, He now points to the fruit of His labors—the children of God. He takes no credit for this fruit, but will eight times

in His prayer to His Father acknowledge that the Father had given Him these wonderful children. See John 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24.

In this verse, His brethren are not described as “sons” but as “children.” Here was another way of pointing to Christ’s humanity. As the father and his children share the same flesh and blood, so Christ became one of us.

2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

As children share in the same flesh and blood, Jesus took upon Himself the same flesh and blood. He “took part” of something that He did not previously possess. He who was fully God became fully man. Paul in writing to the Romans, said, “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Romans 8:3. Jesus took upon Himself the great law of heredity. All the hereditary traits that Mary had received after four thousand years of sin, were passed onto Jesus. Yet in the “likeness of our sinful flesh,” Jesus lived a sinless life, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” Romans 8:4.

Jesus did not come in human flesh to show us how God can live in human flesh, but how you and I can live when we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus was born of the Spirit and walked in the Spirit, we can be born of the Spirit and walk in the Spirit.

2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Until men are set free from slavery to their fallen natures, they will always have fear of failure, of the future, and of death. But Christ is able to deliver us from the bondage of sin and death. In Him we may live a life of righteousness and receive the hope of eternal life.

2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Jesus did not take upon Himself the nature of an angel, but He took upon Himself the flesh and blood of the human race to save man from his sinful condition. It was fallen humanity that Christ came to save and to lift them up out of the pit of sin.

2:17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Because of His concern for man, Jesus became one of us. He subjected Himself to endure all the trials and temptations that men might face, that He might be a “merciful and faithful high priest.” Because He is “merciful” we have hope no matter our transgressions. Yet, He must be a “faithful high priest” who is true to principle. It is His faithfulness to both mercy and justice that makes Him the perfect blend of

both. Due to both His mercy and faithfulness we are able to be reconciled back to God. We are both forgiven and cleanse of our sins that we might be in perfect agreement with God.

2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

He suffered for us. He was tempted for us. He suffered under temptation for us. He went through all this to “succor” or to help us in our battle against our sinful natures. Because He lived a sinless life in our sinful flesh, God’s perfect will might be fulfilled in us.

In chapter one, Paul emphasized the divinity of Christ. In chapter two, he has emphasized the humanity of Christ. With these two truths established, Paul will then introduce Jesus to us as our “high priest.” It is because Jesus is both God and man that He is our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. And it is His priestly ministry alone that can both forgive and cleanse us from sin.

The Humanity of Christ

In this supplemental study on chapter two of Hebrews, we will study a little deeper into the humanity of Jesus.

Our Flesh and Blood

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2:14-17

It is clear that Jesus came in our flesh and blood, that He might “succor” or help them that are tempted.

In what way does He help us with temptation?

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

Jesus was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” and tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, we are able to find in Him “grace to help in time of need.”

What will Jesus be able to help us with?

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4

He was sent in the likeness of our sinful flesh, that the Law might be fulfilled in us. Jesus showed us how we can live in this sinful flesh when we are born again and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. If He did not come in the likeness of our sinful flesh, then He could not be our example.

Did Christ keep the law in our sinful flesh?

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” John 15:10

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:” 1 Peter 2:21, 22

Christ kept the commandments perfectly in our fallen flesh. He did this to (1) become our perfect sacrifice for sin, and (2) to give us an example of loving obedience to His Father’s commandments.

What is sin?

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4

Sin is the transgression of the Ten Commandments. Jesus did not sin. Therefore, Jesus kept the Ten Commandments. Why did He do this? That “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” Jesus kept the Ten Commandments perfectly that we might keep them too.

Does the Bible teach that we can be free from sin in breaking God’s law?

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.” Romans 6:1-7

“We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* Volume 1, 144

“Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 123

“Christ came to this earth and lived a life of perfect obedience, that men and women, through His grace, might also live lives of perfect obedience. This is necessary to their salvation.” *Review and Herald*, March 15, 1906

“But before that time shall come [the Second Coming], everything that is imperfect in us will have been seen and put away. All envy and jealousy and evil surmising and every selfish plan will have been banished from the life.” Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Volume 3, 427

Christ was made in the likeness of our sinful flesh and sinned not. Can we also overcome in the power of His resurrection? Is Jesus truly our example?

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:” 1 Peter 2:21, 22

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” John 15:12

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16:24

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;” 1 Peter 4:1

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1 John 2:6

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” John 13:15

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Romans 8:29

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:” Philippians 2:5

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” Luke 6:35, 36

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15, 16

Clearly Jesus has come to be our example in holy living. We cannot by ourselves live this holy life, but we can choose to surrender our imperfect will to His perfect, and be made willing to keep all that pleases Him, by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

What is the example of Jesus?

“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 5:20 For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel....5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” John 5:19, 20, 30

“But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:26-28

Jesus surrendered His will to the Father to do all that the Father asked through the Spirit. So it can be with us. Jesus lived a life of service, which is a key to having victory against sin. As long as we serve self, we lose power to overcome temptation.

Why is it important for me to follow in the footsteps of Jesus?

“The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 671

“If there ever was a people in need of constantly increasing light from heaven, it is the people that, in this time of peril, God has called us to be the depositaries of His holy law and to vindicate His character before the world.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 5, 746

“He who has not sufficient faith in Christ to believe that he can keep him from sinning, has not the faith that will give him an entrance into the kingdom of God.” *Review and Herald*, March 10, 1904

As you become more like Jesus will you exalt self?

“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power.” Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 64, 65

“Those who are really seeking to perfect Christian character will never indulge the thought that they are sinless.” Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, 7

Perfection of character is perfect surrender to Him that is perfect. It is teachableness at the feet of Jesus.

The Nature of Man

Before Adam sinned it was natural for him to do what was right. When he sinned something happened to him. He now had a bent toward evil. It was no longer natural for him to do what was right, but to do that which is selfish/self-centered/sinful. In fact, when Adam sinned, he now lost the ability not to sin.

Adam and Eve had sinned before they had children. So what would become of their children? Would they inherit the innocent nature that Adam and Eve had before they sinned? No. That would not be possible, for they could not pass on to their children a nature they no longer possessed. They could not pass on an innocent nature. They could only now pass on a self-centered nature or fallen nature.

We have inherited the fallen nature of Adam which is why we struggle with self-centeredness. Selfishness seems to be at the root of our lives, prompting us to do what we should not do.

When a baby is born he is not a sinner by birth. However, every baby is born with a fallen nature. With this inherited fallen nature we inherit negative tendencies—all the leanings to sin. The Bible teachings all have sinned (Romans 3:23) because we have all given into the those sinful tendencies to sin.

“It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins...By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation.” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 306

We inherit sinful tendencies, but we do not inherit guilt. I am not guilty for my parents’ sins. But I do experience guilt when I sin. Guilt is not something we are born with, rather it is the result of sinning or rebelling against God’s will.

What is transmitted from father to son?

Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, even debased morals, physical disease and degeneracy are transmitted. But the children “are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins.”

Are we sinners because we have these wrong tendencies to sin?

“The sin of evilspeaking begins with the cherishing of evil thoughts...An impure thought tolerated, an unholy desire cherished, and the soul is contaminated, its integrity compromised.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 5, 177

It is toleration of the impure thought, it is the cherishing of the unholy desires that constitutes sin and contamination.

Sin is not the thought or desire itself. There is no sin in that desire if that desire is instantly repulsed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must first be gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin.” *Ibid.*, 177

The inclinations of the natural heart become sin when they are cherished.

“There are thoughts and feelings suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men; but if they are not cherished, if they are repulsed as hateful, the soul is not contaminated with guilt, and no other is defiled by their influence.” *Review and Herald*, March 27, 1888.

This means we are sinners by choice, and we make choices based upon the light we have received.

Jesus said, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin... 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” John 15:22, 24

Because of what the people knew about Jesus and what they had witnessed, they were now responsible for the way they would relate to Him.

“Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” John 9:41

If you really did not know, you are not guilty. Sin and guilt are tied closely to knowledge, understanding, and light.

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” James 4:17

“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” James 1:15

When lust [or that sinful desire] surfaces we must deny self of that sin by the power of God. But if we yield to that desire it becomes sin and sin causes death.

“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the

father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” Ezekiel 18:4, 20

The soul that sins shall die.

“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 11:22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” Matthew 11:21-24

Capernaum did not perform as gross of sins as Sodom, but they had more light. Therefore, their sin was greater.

“We shall not be held accountable for the light that has not reached our perception, but for that which we have resisted and refused. A man could not apprehend the truth which had never been presented to him, and therefore could not be condemned for light he had never had.” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, 1145

The Nature of Jesus

It is said of Jesus that He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:” Philippians 2:7

In the likeness of which men?

It would have to be men in their fallen condition, after all, in the Garden of Eden there was only one man and one woman, there were not men (plural). There were men after the fall of Adam and Eve. So Jesus was made in the likeness of men after the fall of Adam and Eve. This is made even clearer in Romans 8:3, 4.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4

Jesus did not come in the UNLIKENESS of sinful flesh, but in the LIKENESS of sinful flesh.

“It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened

by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 49

Jesus accepted humanity after it had already been weakened by 4000 years of sin.

How did He accept that humanity?

“Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity.”

What are the results of the law of heredity?

“Both parents transmit their own characteristics, mental and physical, their dispositions and appetites, to their children.” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 561

“Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son.” Ibid., 306

“There are those who have inherited peculiar tempers and dispositions.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*. Volume 9, 222

If we inherit fallen characteristics and tendencies and traits of character from our parents, and if Jesus accepted the great law of heredity, then Jesus would have received from Mary the fallen nature of man.

Did Jesus take on only the physical results of the fall, such as, hunger, weakness, thirst, and mortality?

“For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 117

Even though Jesus took upon Himself the fallen nature of man after 4000 years of sin, He sinned not!

“Though He had all the strength of passion of humanity, never did He yield to temptation to do one single act which was not pure and elevating and ennobling.” Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, 155

“He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptation; for He was ‘in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.’” Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 71

Jesus had no evil propensities

“Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity...Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called ‘that holy thing.’ It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed, is for us and for our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be.”
Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 5, 1128, 1129

“He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions. As the sinless One, His nature recoiled from evil. He endured struggles and tortures of soul in a world of sin.” Ellen G. White,
Testimonies to the Church, Volume 2, 202

What is meant by “an evil propensity”?

“We need not retain one sinful propensity.” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 7, 943*

We have sinned, but Christ has not sinned. We sinned by giving into some sinful tendency. In so doing we created an evil habit center in our brain. This is what we would call a propensity to sin from having sinned. By committing that same sin over and over, that sinful habit center grew stronger and stronger, and we became a slave to that sinful propensity.

Let’s say that I was born with the inherited tendency to drink alcohol. When I am first tempted to drink I have a choice. The first temptation to drink alcohol is not an evil propensity. If I give into that temptation I have now created an active habit center in my brain to drink alcohol. I will now be tempted from within and without. But thanks be to God that “we need not retain one sinful propensity.”

Jesus never gave into any temptation and therefore never developed an evil propensity. So an evil propensity refers to a cultivated tendency to sin.

Why do we develop these evil propensities while Jesus did not?

Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and always walked in the Spirit. Never did He ever choose to give into the flesh.

What happens to us when we are empowered by the Holy Spirit?

“The Savior took upon Himself the infirmities of humanity and lived a sinless life, that men might have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they could not overcome. Christ came to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ and His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin.” Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 180

“Christ came to this earth and lived a life of perfect obedience, that men and women, through His grace, might also live lives of perfect obedience. This is necessary to their salvation.” *Review and Herald*, March 15, 1906

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:48

What does it mean that we can be perfect?

Biblical perfection is victory over sin. This happens when we perfectly surrender our will to God. Then the perfect work of the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of God’s dear Son.

Biblical perfection is not legalism; it is not trying to make ourselves good enough to earn salvation.

Biblical perfection is not a plateau. Rather Biblical perfection is continuous growth.

Biblical perfection is not freedom from temptation. Rather Biblical perfection is refusing to yield to temptation.

Biblical perfection is not independence from God, but dependence upon God.

Biblical perfection is teachableness; it is a hungering to be led of the Spirit.

Born with a sinful nature, but not born as sinners.

The fact that we can follow in the footsteps of Jesus means that our nature can change. Now some teach that we are born sinners and will therefore continue to live in sin. But the Bible teaches us to overcome sin by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it must be true that we were born with a fallen nature that is inclined to sin. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit, a person with a fallen nature will commit sin. When he commits sin then he becomes a sinner.

This must be true because we know that Jesus was never a sinner. Therefore, He must not have been born a sinner by taking upon Himself our sinful flesh. Rather, He took upon Himself our nature after 4000 years of sin and chose not to sin. This makes sin a matter of choice, not birth. Therefore, Jesus could be made in the likeness of our sinful flesh and still live a sinless life, because sin is a choice.

Jesus emptied Himself

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:”
Philippians 2:6, 7

Jesus was equal with His Father in divinity. He did not need to grasp for equality with God because He was God.

He made Himself of “no reputation,” which means that He emptied Himself.

What did He empty Himself of to become a man?

He laid aside His omnipotence. Jesus said, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” John 5:30

Jesus did not use His own power to help Himself.

He laid aside His omniscient. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Luke 2:52.

He grew in wisdom, meaning that He needed to learn and be taught.

“He gained knowledge as we may do...He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 70

“Before He came to earth, the plan lay out before Him, perfect in all its details. But as He walked among men, He was guided, step by step, by the Father’s will.” *Ibid.*, 147

“Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God’s plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans.” Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 479

He laid aside His glory.

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Isaiah 53:2

Jesus allowed His deity to rest inactive as He lived among us as a man. However, Jesus did not cease to be God when He became a man, rather He laid those divine attributes aside and did not use them for His own benefit.

Hebrews Chapter Three

3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

My dear brethren, my “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” in view of the exalted position of the Son, consider now Christ Jesus, as the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession.”

Paul is speaking plainly to those who are familiar with the sanctuary service. They have come to accept Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of which the entire Hebrew economy pointed to. Now that you have accepted Him as the Son of God and the Son of man, consider His role for us in the heavenly sanctuary above. He is the “Apostle” or “Messenger” of a better covenant, with better sacrifices. He is the “High Priest of our profession,” and there is none other.

3:2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

Jesus faithfully carried out His Father’s will. He was faithful in becoming a man. He was faithful in enduring life’s trials and in overcoming every temptation. He was faithful in the garden of Gethsemane. He was faithful on Calvary’s cross. He was faithful to the entire plan to save man.

Moses was also faithful in all that the Lord asked him to do. He sojourned in the wilderness for forty years. He led the people of Israel out of Egypt, and led them to the Promised Land. But as the Son is greater than the angels, He is also greater than Moses.

3:3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

Jesus is more worthy than Moses as the builder of the house is greater than the house.

3:4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

The church is the house of God and Moses is part of that house. Moses played a significant role in the household of God. But Moses is not the Builder of the house or the church. Jesus is the head of the

church. As the builder of this church, Jesus is God, for “he that built all things is God.” This is another way Paul proves that Jesus is fully divine.

3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Moses was faithful in his house as a servant. He was faithful to his family and to the nation of Israel. But Someone would come that is greater than Moses. Moses said, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.”

Deuteronomy 18:15. In other words, a Prophet would come amongst the Hebrew nation that the people shall listen to above Moses.

Who should they be looking for? They should be looking for Someone who would be even more faithful to the commands of God than Moses. In no way does this depreciate the service of Moses. Rather, it exalts the service of Him who is coming. The One who is coming will be perfectly faithful in all that God has said, for He who is coming is the Son of God. He who is coming is the Builder of the house.

3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

As a “son” is greater than the “servant,” so Christ is greater than Moses. Moses was faithful in his house as a servant, but Christ is faithful to his house as the Son of the Father. As believers in Christ, we are His house. As such, we should hold our confidence in Him as He was faithful in all things. Why should we doubt or be dismayed? Why should we be downcast or gloomy? We should not, for He is faithful and our confidence is in Him. Because He is perfectly faithful unto the end, we shall rejoice in hope unto the end.

Indeed, we should rejoice for we are not slaves but sons. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Romans 8:14, 15. “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Galatians 4:7. He is faithful who has called us to glory. He is faithful to His own children, and we are His sons and daughters. This gives us confidence and hope to always approach Him with reverence and trust.

3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

The Holy Spirit works upon the heart of all men to respond to the mercies of God. But tragically men procrastinate and wait for a more convenient time. But “today” we should learn all that the Holy Spirit desires to teach us. Only in this way can it be said that we have found the “rest” that God has promised.

The phrase “if ye will hear His voice,” teaches us that we are all free moral agents. “If” any man hears the voice of the Spirit and responds with confidence, then his heart will be changed and softened. But “if” he chooses to ignore the moving of the Spirit, his heart will be hardened.

3:8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Israel of old hardened its heart in the wilderness and a whole generation never entered into the rest of Canaan, except Joshua and Caleb. There were many tests for the Israelites to learn trust in the Lord, but their common course of action was failure. The “day of temptation” was the test at Kadesh-barnea, where the Israelites rebelled again. See Numbers 14:1-35. Again, as a result, they did not enter the land of Canaan.

3:9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

The Israelites witnessed the wonderful power and protection of God for forty years, yet they would always test God’s patience. God is absolute patience, therefore, the Israelites were manifesting their own unfaithful, distrust, and evil nature. God will always exhibit perfect patience, but He cannot reward the wicked who refuse to repent.

While we should take courage that God was so patient with Israel those forty years, we should never despise the mercies of God and continue in sin.

3:10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

God provided manna from heaven to feed them for forty years. Their shoes and garments miraculously never became worn. Yet they did always err because their hearts were unconverted. God was grieved in the sense that He they had come to the time of their probation. It was evident that they would not choose to change.

What kept them in this rebellious mode? It is easy to say it was because they were unconverted, which is true. Where did they truly err? Did they take the daily blessings of God as if God owed them something? Did they come to believe that God was supposed to bless them even if they remained rebellious? Can we come to the same conclusions? Do we act as if God should bless us even in our rebellion against His will? Do we complain about facing the consequences of our own choosing?

3:11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

God desired that all of Israel would enter the land of Canaan and into the spiritual rest that would make them witnesses of His grace to the whole world. But the generation that was delivered from Egyptian bondage rebelled throughout their wilderness journey. Therefore, they neither entered that physical rest of entering the Promised Land, nor that spiritual rest by entering into the power of His grace to live victorious lives. They could have had both, but received neither.

3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The opening phrase, “Take heed, brethren,” means “do not make the same mistake as ancient Israel.” We can see that ancient Israel did not enter the Promised Land because of an “evil heart of unbelief.” If

something did not go the way that they wanted, then they complained. This behavior is in contrast to the faithfulness exhibited by Moses and Jesus. Therefore, Paul warns the believers of his day not to manifest that same kind of unbelief as the Hebrews. This warning is for us as well. We are to trust in the Lord no matter our circumstances. Rather than complain, give thanks. Rather than murmur, sing a hymn or spiritual song.

3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Encourage one another while there is time. Otherwise, our lack of concern for one another has a way of hardening our own hearts; we open the door to the deceitfulness of sin. When sin begins to look attractive we have been deceived. If we had the spirit of Christ we would hate sin and recoil from it. But when sin seems attractive and desirable, then we know that some sinful tendency is still rooted within our hearts.

3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

We are to be “partakers” or sharers in the life of Christ now. We are not to wait for some future time to be changed. We may now experience walking with God. In fact, we must. The same faith and love that we had at the beginning we are to hold steadfast unto the end. “The beginning of our confidence” in Him is not to wane, but to ever increase. But many in the early church thought that Christ would have come by now and their faith, love, and zeal for Christ began to diminish. Even today, some thought Christ would have come by now. Instead of holding onto the confidence they had at the beginning, they begin to set their roots more firmly in this old world. They do not pray as much. They have lost much of the zeal to share the truth that at first had inspired them to much study, prayer, and witnessing. It is true that the Second Coming of Christ has been delayed, but let us not lose our fervor for the Lord and the message He has given to us to herald throughout the world.

3:15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

This is a repetition of verse 8, and we would do well to heed its warning. By praying and studying less we begin to harden our hearts. Satan finds ways to cancel Bible studies knowing that it can cause people to lose interest. We can keep the heart softened by doing the right things on a consistent basis. But if we begin to murmur we are more likely to murmur more. We are to feed righteousness and starve iniquity.

3:16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

The vast majority of those who came out of Egypt had hardened their hearts. However, there were some who did not. We know that Caleb and Joshua remained faithful, but there were others, such as, Eleazar, the priest, and Phinehas, his son. See Joshua 17:4; 22:13, 31, 32; Numbers 25:7.

3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

While Caleb and Joshua were consistently faithful, the majority of Israel was consistently disobedient. While they desired deeply to enter into the land of Canaan, they would not enter into His spiritual rest. Hence, they were unfit to fulfill the role God had for them in the land of Palestine. They “grieved” God for forty years by their refusal to be taught—by their failure to learn trust and faith in God. So they died in the wilderness never having received the promise.

3:18 And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Those who “believed not” were those who continued in sin and rebellion. It takes faith in God and God alone to be an overcomer. As God alone delivered them from the Egyptian army, so God alone can give us the power to overcome the greater enemy of our sinful natures. Israel could do nothing to save themselves from the chariots of Egypt; in the same way we cannot change ourselves from a sinner to a saint. This is the work of divine power. God would perform one miracle after another to show them His power and how much He cared. But Israel believed not and kept on sinning.

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

Had they entered into God’s rest and trusted in Him, they could have entered into the Promised Land. However, because of their unbelief they could not be entrusted with the commission to take the land in Canaan.

The next generation with Caleb and Joshua did enter in physically, but throughout their generations they still failed to enter into God’s rest spiritually.

Hebrews Chapter Four

4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

These opening words indicated that many in the early church were in danger of making the same mistake as ancient Israel. A whole generation did not enter into Canaan. The next generation did, but failed to enter into spiritual rest. Now the early church faced a spiritual dilemma. The ultimate promise is that God will save us from our sins. Note that the gospel is more than the forgiveness of sins. God desires to free us from sin. We are not free from temptation, but we do not need to consent to sin. This is the

rest that God desired of ancient Israel. This is the spiritual rest that He desired for the early church and for us.

The idea that we can “come short” of spiritual rest implies that there is a part we play. While it is God’s power that gives us the victory over our inherited and cultivated tendencies to sin, it ever remains the choice of the believer to seek deliverance from sin.

4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Those in the early church heard the gospel preached as well as ancient Israel before them. Paul tells his audience that while Israel of old heard the precious words of the gospel, it did not profit him because they lacked true faith. It is not enough to hear or read truth. The Words of God must be received by faith before they can bear fruit of a Christlike character.

It is a tragedy that many have not heard the precious gospel because of false shepherds who preach smooth words. But there is a part the listener plays in his own search for truth. We are to hear and obey. We are to trust and obey. But all obedience to God’s commands depends upon faith in His ability to mold and transform us.

4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

While ancient Israel did not enter that rest (Hebrews 3:19), many in Paul’s days did enter that rest. This shows that the ultimate rest that God has for His people was not the literal land of Palestine. God’s ultimate rest is that spiritual rest which prepares us to live in the heavenly Canaan.

It is quite obvious that we must be speaking about spiritual rest because those that did enter His rest in Paul’s day did not possess the land of Israel. In fact, the early church found it near impossible to even own a church building. They met mostly in homes. Yet, they had entered into that rest because the rest that God desires for His people is spiritual rest.

If new believers in Paul’s day were entering into this spiritual rest, then that rest is still available for all who would believe. That spiritual rest is available to us today.

In the second part of this verse we have a reference to the Creation week, which states, “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” It is obvious from our reading of Genesis chapters one and two that God had intended that men and women would enjoy God’s rest. Man was created on the sixth day and then enjoyed the Sabbath hours on the next day, the seventh day. So in man’s first two days of existence, he experienced both labor (the sixth day) and rest (the seventh day).

The first rest was a Sabbath rest. On this Sabbath day, Adam and Eve enjoyed the presence of God and the worship of God. In their original innocent, they were in agreement with God. This is what spiritual rest is all about. God wants us to get us back to that original rest.

When it says that God's "works were finished," it means more than simply a material creation. There was a purpose for everything that God created. He did not just create a man; He created man with a particular purpose in mind. When the Creation week was finished, everything was perfect. The finishing touch of that Creation week was the Sabbath rest. Adam and Eve could rest assured of God's love, of His sustaining power, of His close fellowship with them, and His purpose for their lives.

Let us consider a couple verses that speak about our rest in Him. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." Jeremiah 6:16. Notice that "rest" has to do with walking in the good path. Sin is the bad path, not the good path. Rest then has to do with walking with God. Creation rest is enjoying the presence of God. In fact, we prefer our fellowship with God over our fellowship with one another. But because of our fellowship with God we choose to love our fellowman as our self.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29. Spiritual rest is to have the burden of guilt lifted from your shoulders. It has to do with taking upon the yoke of Jesus in helping our fellowman. It has to do with humility and meekness. There is a death to selfishness and pride. We have come to see others as better than ourselves. Spiritual rest has to do with learning of Jesus. It is becoming one with Him. It is found in a growing faith that leads to a closer and closer relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

4:4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

Paul was inspired to connect the Sabbath with spiritual rest. So what do we know about the Sabbath?

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:1-3

Here we find that God sanctified the Sabbath. In other words, He made the Sabbath holy and set it apart for a holy use.

"Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12

The Sabbath is a sign that God wants to sanctify us. God wants to make us holy and also set us apart for a holy work.

"And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God." Ezekiel 20:20

The Sabbath is a sign that we wholly belong to God.

“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.” Isaiah 56:2

We are not to pollute the Sabbath nor are we to pollute ourselves. As the Sabbath was sanctified we are to be sanctified.

By keeping the Sabbath we are agreeing with God’s original purpose. On the sixth day, after God had created everything, He said it was “very good.” In fact, it was perfect. By keeping the Sabbath we show our faith in the original perfection of our world. We are also saying that we are in agreement with that perfection. More than that, we are agreeing to cooperate with God to be brought back to that original perfection. This can only be done by becoming perfect in Christ.

The Sabbath could never represent imperfection, nor could it represent a lack of faith in God’s ability to make us perfect in Him. The Sabbath has to represent perfection. And since the rest that God desires for us is connected to the Sabbath, therefore the rest that God desires is nothing less than bringing us back to that original perfection.

God did rest from His work because it was perfect. There was nothing more for Him to do. There is nothing more to add. It was finished; it was perfect. By resting on the Sabbath we are expressing our desire to rest in God’s original perfection of our world. And if we cooperate with Him now in the perfection of character, then we shall live in the perfect New Earth.

4:5 And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest.

As Paul was writing this verse, it is evident that men and women still had an opportunity to “enter into” this rest. “If they shall enter into my rest,” means that the invitation to enter into that rest was still available. It is available to us today as long as probation lingers. But when probation closes, that opportunity to enter His rest is closed.

The time will come when the door will be shut, as Jesus said in His parable of the ten virgins, “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” Matthew 25:10-12

4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

Ancient Israel did not enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief. However, Israel’s unbelief did not nullify the promise. The promise of rest is still good. In Paul’s day there “remaineth” a rest for the people of God. And there remains a rest for us too. It is not a physical rest in Palestine, but that spiritual rest in Christ Jesus our Lord. Not only does that spiritual rest remain, but the Sabbath which points to that spiritual rest also remains.

We can be assured that “some” will enter that spiritual rest and will dwell in the New Earth. God’s promise is sure. His original plan for man will succeed and be fulfilled. There will be a holy people upon this Earth when it is created a second time with a people who have been re-created in Christ.

4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Ancient Israel did not enter the Promised Land. That generation died in the wilderness. The next generation entered the land with Joshua but did not enter into that spiritual rest. Centuries went by until the time of David. It was then hoped that Israel would now enter that spiritual rest, but they did not. Therefore, there still remains a rest for the people of God. And Paul says to his generation, “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” The same Word is calling us to enter into that rest. Here we are two thousand years after the writing of this book, and we still have not entered that rest. But there will be a last generation that will enter that rest. Praise God! The harvest of the wheat and tares will come to fruition. Both will come to perfect maturity in the end.

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

The translators should have written, “For if Joshua (not Jesus) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” You can see this correction made in the margin of your Bible.

Here again is Paul’s argument. If Joshua had led them into the rest by simply bringing them into the land of Canaan, then God would not have afterward spoken of another day for His people to enter that rest. Therefore, it is quite obvious that the rest that God speaks of is not the literally occupation of Palestine. Even in David’s day when they controlled the land of Palestine, they still had not entered that rest. Now in Paul’s day, many but not all, entered that rest. It is clear that the rest spoken of is not the occupation of Palestine.

4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

The word for “rest” in this passage is “sabbatismos,” which means Sabbath, and may be translated as “keeping the Sabbath.” The verse would literally read, “There remaineth therefore still a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.”

The word “remaineth” clearly refers back to the original and only Sabbath for the people of God. Therefore, the people of God are not to be looking for a new Sabbath. No other day would point back to the creative works of God from which He rested. It is the same Sabbath that Adam and Eve, Moses, Joshua, David, and Jesus kept. It is the one and only Sabbath that could point to the spiritual rest that God desires of us.

As the Sabbath is higher than any other day, the rest that God speaks of is higher than any other kind of rest. The seventh-day Sabbath points back to perfection, therefore the spiritual rest that we are to seek is perfection in Christ.

4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

This verse has clear reference to God's creative works and the first Sabbath. God did indeed cease from His works of creation to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath. Since God is perfect, and His works of creation were perfect, then He perfectly rested on the seventh day. If we enter into that spiritual rest that brings us closer and closer to that original perfection in Him, then we will truly rest on the Sabbath day as He did. He who would keep the Sabbath holy, must himself be holy. The early church, which kept the seventh-day Sabbath was in danger of living in sin while trying to keep the Sabbath as a holy day of rest. But we cannot truly keep the Sabbath while knowingly living in sin.

We could fall into the same trap as did ancient Israel. They thought they had entered into God's rest because they now occupied the Promised Land. We may believe that we have entered into God's Sabbath rest because we go to church on the seventh-day. In the same way that the seventh-day is no ordinary day, but a holy day set apart from every other day, we are to live no ordinary life. We are to live a holy life set apart to serve God with our whole heart.

While we are not asked of God to return to the land of Palestine, we are commanded of God to keep His Sabbath holy. True Sabbath-keeping is but an outward sign of an inward work. The believer now has a new heart, a renewed mind, whereby he chooses to glorify God in all things. Resting on the Sabbath is the outward sign that we are now resting in Him.

4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Let us be diligent and earnest to enter into that spiritual rest. Do not follow in the steps of ancient Israel who lacked faith. Learn from their failure.

Ancient Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land but failed. Today, we can fail or fall too. The fact that a man can "fall" shows that he has at some point confessed Christ. However, if we do not commit ourselves fully to Christ we will fall as did ancient Israel.

4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Word of God is powerful and full of energy. The same power that created our world is found in the Word of God. Not only is the Word full of life and power but it cuts far better and deeper than any two-edged sword. As a sharp sword can cut through joints and marrow, the Word can cut through the thoughts and intents of the heart. As a "discerner," the Word judges our thoughts and motives. Nothing is hidden from the Word; it exposes all.

It is true that God's Word is an accurate historical record of the past, but it is quick and powerful. If we would receive the power in God's Word, then we would enter into that spiritual rest.

4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

There is no man that can escape the discernment of God's Word. All who fail to comply with the Words of God are without excuse. God sees all and will judge all. Nothing can be hid from God.

Those who live by faith rejoice that God sees all. Only he who remains in sin is fearful of an all-seeing God.

4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Because we have such a great High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, let us hold on to every true doctrine, every covenant promise, and the faith that we have in Him. Do not give up now. Jesus intercedes on our behalf.

Jesus is our great High Priest, who is greater than Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, and the angels. He is the Son of God.

4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Though He is so great, yet He became a man. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He knows what it is like to be fully man. He experienced hunger, pain, and insult. Yet never did He sin even by a thought.

4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. There we will find the mercy seat and the Ten Commandments. More than that, we shall find Jesus our great High Priest. If we shall pray for grace, we will have it. With our great High Priest in heaven, we are more than conquerors. We shall conquer gloriously over sin. We shall enter into that rest because of Him.

The Sanctuary Service

The Plan of Salvation

“There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is ‘present truth’ that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause. But such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell.” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 63.

The subjects of the sanctuary and the 2300 day prophecy found in Daniel 8:14 are to be especially studied at this time. Both of which cannot be separated from studying and understanding the connection between the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Let us consider some of the references to the heavenly Sanctuary in the book of Hebrews.

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Hebrews 8:1, 2

We know there was an earthly sanctuary, but many have never heard that there is the “true tabernacle” which God had made in heaven. The earthly was but a miniature copy of the one in heaven.

Where do we find the “sanctuary” first mentioned in Scripture?

“Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.” Exodus 15:17

The above verse is in reference to the time of Moses around 1500 BC. This means that there was no mention of a sanctuary for the first 2,500 years of Earth’s history. There were sacrifices and altars from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, but there was no sanctuary until the time of Moses.

God instructed the children of Israel to build a sanctuary and learn the plan of salvation before they reached the Promised Land. Throughout their wilderness journey they were to gather insights and understanding of God’s plan to save man from sin and his sinful nature.

What does the word “sanctuary” mean?

In Exodus 25:8, it reads, “And let them make me a sanctuary [“miqdash”]; that I may dwell among them [or in them].”

The word for “sanctuary” is “miqdash.” The Hebrew root word for “miqdash” is “qadesh”, which means to set apart, to be separated for a holy or sacred purpose. This same word is used in association with God and is translated as the word “holy.”

“For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy [“qadosh”]; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” Leviticus 11:44, 45

God is holy, His sanctuary is holy, and we are to be holy. The holy sanctuary service is to teach us how to be holy. The sanctuary which is set apart for a holy purpose is to teach us how to be set apart for a holy purpose.

We become holy as our Holy God dwells with us. The sanctuary will teach us how God can and will dwell within us. This point is emphasized in the following verse, “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8. The verse would be more correctly translated, “And let them make me a sanctuary that I might dwell **within** them.” As Paul wrote, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them**; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16

The purpose of the sanctuary and its services is to teach us how to have close fellowship with God. I mean, close intimate fellowship with God that transforms us into saints, or holy ones.

Consider these additional texts that call us to be holy in Him:

“Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.” Leviticus 19:2

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:14-16

At the time of Creation, what did God set apart for a holy purpose?

“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified [“qadosh”] it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Genesis 2:3

The Seventh-day Sabbath was made before sin. God had set it apart from every other day of the week for a holy purpose. The Sabbath is a sign of God’s sanctifying power. “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify

["qadash"] them...And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God." Ezekiel 20:12, 20

The Sabbath is a blessed time of coming together to exalt His sanctifying influence throughout the week. We come to worship Him who has re-created us into the beautiful image of His Son. By keeping the Sabbath, we are declaring that we choose to be separate from the world, and fully united to Christ.

What two great institutions or truths were the Israelites to guard sacredly?

"Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD." Leviticus 19:30. See also Leviticus 26:2.

They were to sacredly guard the Sabbath and the sanctuary services. The first pointed to God as our Creator, and the latter pointed to God as our Redeemer.

What two great things did Moses receive on Mount Sinai?

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.... And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." Exodus 24:12; 25:8, 9

Moses was given the Ten Commandments which reveal the perfect moral character of God, and he received a vision of the heavenly sanctuary. Moses would be instructed of God to make a miniature copy of the heavenly sanctuary on earth. In that earthly sanctuary would be placed God's perfect Ten Commandments. So we can see that the Ten Commandments and the sanctuary go together.

What is the relationship between the sanctuary and the Ten Commandments?

The sanctuary and its service would teach us how to be (1) forgiven of our sins, and (2) cleansed from sin.

The earthly sanctuary and its services taught ancient Israel God's plan to save man from (1) the penalty of sin, and (2) freedom from the power of sin. And what is sin? It is the transgression of God's law. See 1 John 3:4.

So the earthly sanctuary and its services will teach us how to be forgiven for breaking God's Ten Commandments, and how we can keep those Ten Commandments.

Many error by teaching that the Ten Commandments have nothing to do with the gospel. But on Mount Sinai, God gave to Moses both the Ten Commandments and the sanctuary truth, and those Ten Commandments were placed in the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary.

The following are references of the sanctuary Moses was shown on the Mount. Exodus 25:8, 9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Numbers 8:4

How long was Moses on the Mount receiving this precious instruction?

“And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights” Exodus 24:18

How important is the number 40 in the Bible?

It rained for 40 days and 40 nights when God would destroy the wicked antediluvian world with the Flood. Genesis 7

Noah waited another 40 days before he opened the window of the Ark. Genesis 8

Moses' face shone after his 40 days on the Mount. Exodus 34:29

The spies searched out the land for 40 days. Numbers 13:25

Jonah warned the city of Ninevah for 40 days and the people repented. Jonah 3:4

Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. Matthew 4:1, 2

Jesus was on the earth for 40 days after His crucifixion. Acts 1:3

As we consider the above examples, we can see that the number 40 is often associated with judgment and mercy. The sanctuary message is also about judgment and mercy. God is the perfect blend of mercy and justice. We will find these two qualities clearly taught in the sanctuary message.

What two men did God appoint to carry out the building of the sanctuary?

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name **Bezaleel** the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him **Aholiab**, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.” Exodus 31:1-11

There was no human devising in the construction of the sanctuary. It was all a revelation from God. In the same way, we can add nothing to the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing on man's part whereby he can earn salvation.

Everything that was built was but a revelation from God. As Paul wrote, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou **make all things** according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." Hebrews 8:5

As we study the sanctuary, we are to consider only those things that God has revealed. In addition, we are to interpret the meaning of the sanctuary and its services only as explained by the Word. As Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21

As Bezaleel and Aholiab were filled with the Spirit to build the sanctuary, we must be filled with the Spirit to understand its meaning.

The Structure of the Sanctuary

How was the sanctuary constructed? See Exodus 26:1-29

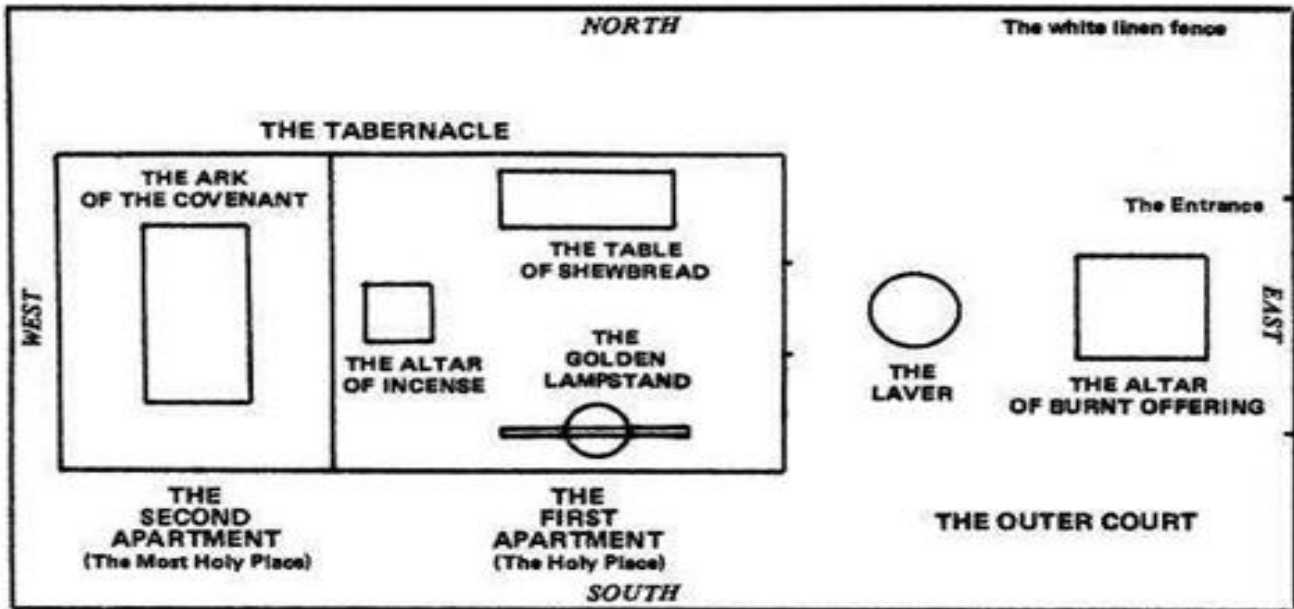
"The tabernacle was so constructed that it could be taken apart and borne with the Israelites in all their journeyings. It was therefore small, being not more than fifty-five feet in length, and eighteen in breadth and height. Yet it was a magnificent structure. The wood employed for the building and its furniture was that of the acacia tree, which was less subject to decay than any other to be obtained at Sinai. The walls consisted of upright boards, set in silver sockets, and held firm by pillars and connecting bars; and all were overlaid with gold, giving to the building the appearance of solid gold. The roof was formed of four sets of curtains, the innermost of "fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubim of cunning work;" the other three respectively were of goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, so arranged as to afford complete protection." Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 347

How accurate was the building of the sanctuary? Exodus 26:30

"Chosen men were especially endowed by God with skill and wisdom for the construction of the sacred building. God Himself gave to Moses the plan of that structure, with particular directions as to its size and form, the materials to be employed, and every article of furniture which it was to contain. The holy places made with hands were to be 'figures of the true,' 'patterns of things in the heavens' (Hebrews 9:24, 23) --a miniature representation of the heavenly temple where Christ, our great High Priest, after offering His life as a sacrifice, was to minister in the sinner's behalf. God presented before Moses in the

mount a view of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern shown him. All these directions were carefully recorded by Moses, who communicated them to the leaders of the people.” Ibid., 343

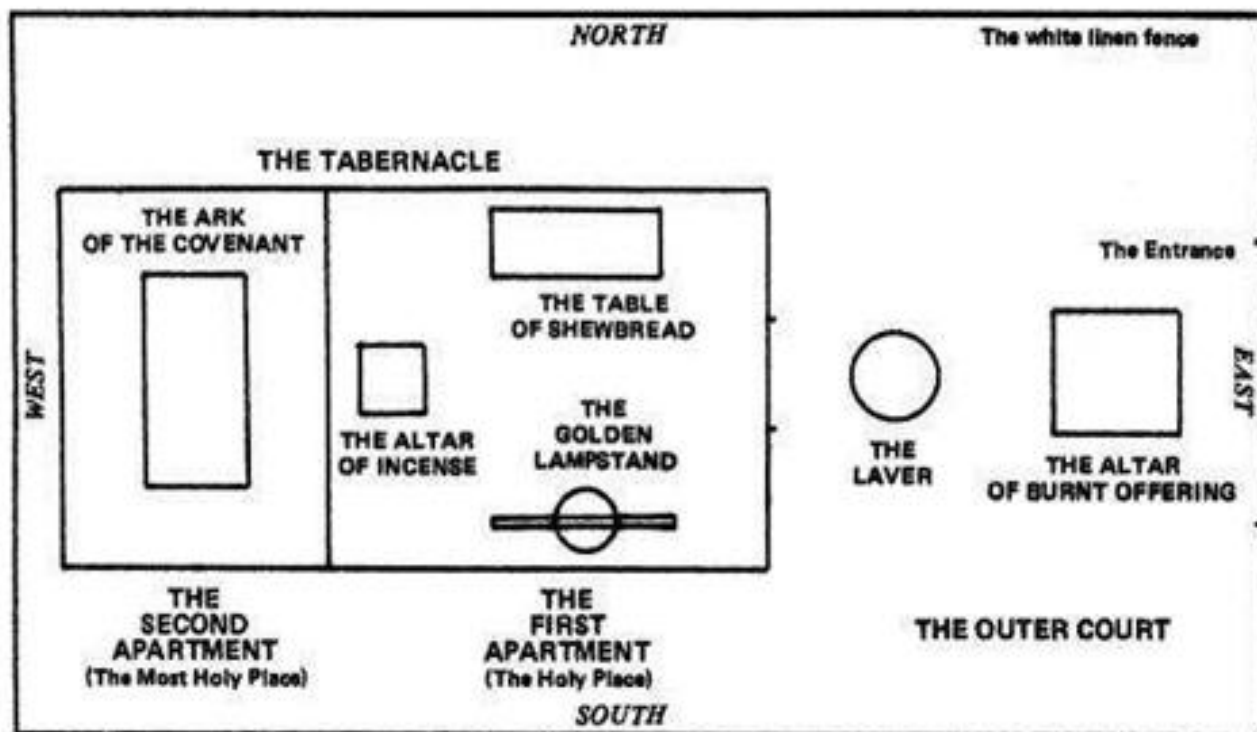
How many different sections comprised the sanctuary? Courtyard, Holy Place, and Most Holy Place



Exodus 40:1-8 describes the setting up of the sanctuary, often referred to as the tabernacle. In verse 3, we find described the **Most Holy Place** where we find the ark of the testimony and the Ten Commandments. In verses 4 and 5, we have described the **Holy Place** where we find the table of showbread, the seven-branched candle stick, and the altar of incense. In verses 6-8, we have described the **Courtyard** where we find the altar of burnt offerings and the laver.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 40:2 On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. 40:3 And thou shalt put therein **the ark of the testimony** [found in the Most Holy Place], and cover the ark with the veil. 40:4 And thou shalt bring in the **table** [of showbread, found in the Holy Place], and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the [seven-branched] **candlestick** [found in the Holy Place], and light the lamps thereof. 40:5 And thou shalt set the **altar of gold for the incense** [the altar of incense found in the Holy Place] before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle. 40:6 And thou shalt set the **altar of the burnt offering** [found in the Courtyard] before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. 40:7 And thou shalt set the **laver** [found in the Courtyard] between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein. 40:8 And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate.”

These are the main sections and pieces of furniture associated with the Sanctuary.



The Courtyard has the Altar of Burnt Offerings and the Laver.

There is the Courtyard where we find the altar of burnt offerings and the laver. The following are other verses in reference to the Courtyard. Exodus 27:9-17; 38:9-20; 40:8

“The sacred tent was enclosed in an open space called the court, which was surrounded by hangings, or screens, of fine linen, suspended from pillars of brass. The entrance to this enclosure was at the eastern end. It was closed by curtains of costly material and beautiful workmanship, though inferior to those of the sanctuary. The hangings of the court being only about half as high as the walls of the tabernacle, the building could be plainly seen by the people without. In the court, and nearest the entrance, stood the brazen altar of burnt offering. Upon this altar were consumed all the sacrifices made by fire unto the Lord, and its horns were sprinkled with the atoning blood. Between the altar and the door of the tabernacle was the laver, which was also of brass, made from the mirrors that had been the freewill offering of the women of Israel. At the laver the priests were to wash their hands and their feet whenever they went into the sacred apartments, or approached the altar to offer a burnt offering unto the Lord.” Ibid., 347, 348

The Holy Place has the Seven-branch Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread, and the Altar of Incense.

There is the Holy Place where we find the seven-branched candlestick [also known as the Menorah], the table of showbread, and the altar of incense.

“In the first apartment, or holy place, were the table of showbread, the candlestick, or lampstand, and the altar of incense. The table of showbread stood on the north. With its ornamental crown, it was

overlaid with pure gold. On this table the priests were each Sabbath to place twelve cakes, arranged in two piles, and sprinkled with frankincense. The loaves that were removed, being accounted holy, were to be eaten by the priests. On the south was the seven-branched candlestick, with its seven lamps. Its branches were ornamented with exquisitely wrought flowers, resembling lilies, and the whole was made from one solid piece of gold. There being no windows in the tabernacle, the lamps were never all extinguished at one time, but shed their light by day and by night. Just before the veil separating the holy place from the most holy and the immediate presence of God, stood the golden altar of incense. Upon this altar the priest was to burn incense every morning and evening; its horns were touched with the blood of the sin offering, and it was sprinkled with blood upon the great Day of Atonement. The fire upon this altar was kindled by God Himself and was sacredly cherished. Day and night the holy incense diffused its fragrance throughout the sacred apartments, and without, far around the tabernacle." Ibid., 348

There is the Most Holy Place where we find the ark of the covenant.

"Beyond the inner veil was the holy of holies, where centered the symbolic service of atonement and intercession, and which formed the connecting link between heaven and earth. In this apartment was the ark, a chest of acacia wood, overlaid within and without with gold, and having a crown of gold about the top. It was made as a depository for the tables of stone, upon which God Himself had inscribed the Ten Commandments. Hence it was called the ark of God's testament, or the ark of the covenant, since the Ten Commandments were the basis of the covenant made between God and Israel.

"The cover of the sacred chest was called the mercy seat. This was wrought of one solid piece of gold, and was surmounted by golden cherubim, one standing on each end. One wing of each angel was stretched forth on high, while the other was folded over the body (see Ezekiel 1:11) in token of reverence and humility. The position of the cherubim, with their faces turned toward each other, and looking reverently downward toward the ark, represented the reverence with which the heavenly host regard the law of God and their interest in the plan of redemption.

"Above the mercy seat was the Shekinah, the manifestation of the divine Presence; and from between the cherubim, God made known His will. Divine messages were sometimes communicated to the high priest by a voice from the cloud. Sometimes a light fell upon the angel at the right, to signify approval or acceptance, or a shadow or cloud rested upon the one at the left to reveal disapproval or rejection.

"The law of God, enshrined within the ark, was the great rule of righteousness and judgment. That law pronounced death upon the transgressor; but above the law was the mercy seat, upon which the presence of God was revealed, and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon was granted to the repentant sinner. Thus in the work of Christ for our redemption, symbolized by the sanctuary service, 'mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.'" Psalm 85:10. Ibid., 348, 349

The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place

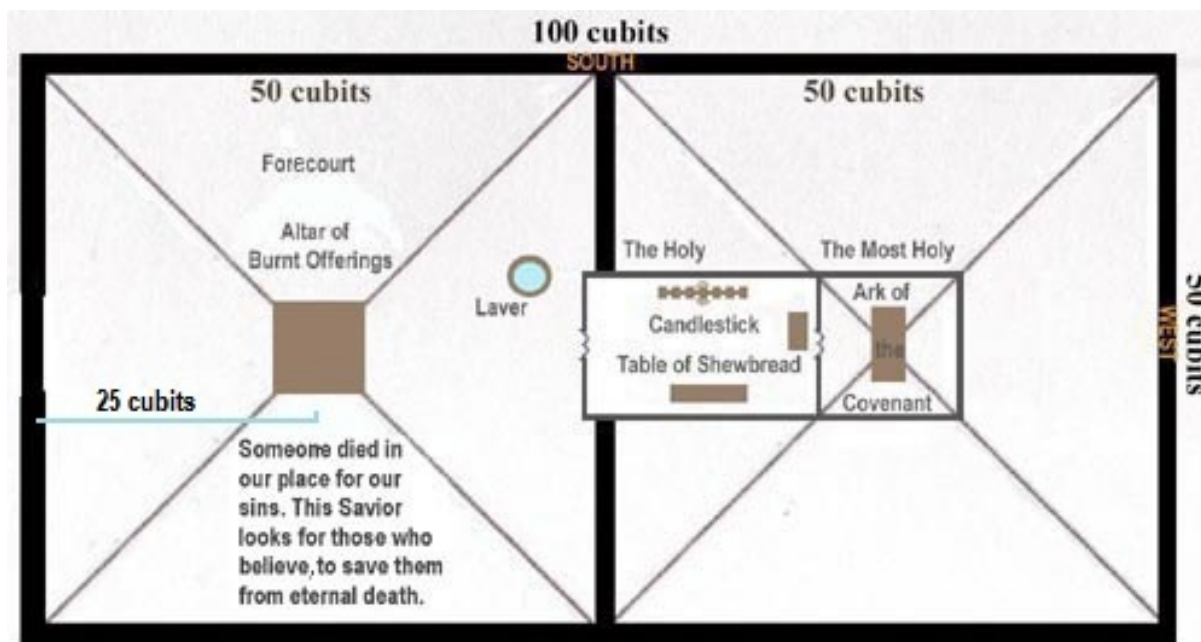
The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place formed one building which was divided into two different compartments, and it was often called the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide, and ten cubits high. See Exodus 26:15-29; 36:20-34

What is a cubit? A biblical cubit is considered the length from the elbow to the longest finger or about six handbreadths, which is about 18 inches. Therefore, ten cubits would be fifteen feet and thirty cubits would be 45 feet.

“The tabernacle was so constructed that it could be taken apart and borne with the Israelites in all their journeyings. It was therefore small, being not more than fifty-five feet in length, and eighteen in breadth and height. Yet it was a magnificent structure.” Ibid., 347

The Most Holy Place was a perfect cube that was ten cubits long, ten cubits wide, and ten cubits high. This would make the Holy Place ten cubits wide and ten cubits high, but twenty cubits long.



The dimensions of the Courtyard are found in Exodus 27:18, which reads, “The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass.” The Courtyard was 100 cubits in length [or about 150 feet], 50 cubits wide [or about 75 feet wide], and 5 cubits high [or 7 ½ feet].

What did these three different sections represent?

We have made a number of references to the sanctuary, both the earthly and the heavenly. We have spoken about the courtyard, the holy place, and the most holy place. We have referred to Jesus as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary. He is currently in the most holy place performing the work of judgment; preparatory for His second coming. If you have never study the subject of the sanctuary and

its services, we felt that it would be a great benefit to add this as supplemental reading for our study in the book of Hebrews.

Freedom from Guilt; Freedom from Known Sins; Freedom from Hidden Sins

I would first like to begin by saying that the sanctuary is all about being free in Jesus. Doesn't that sound nice! We are to be free from guilt (courtyard), free from known sins (holy place), and free from hidden sins (most holy place). Simply said, the sanctuary will teach us how Jesus will make us free from the slavery of sin.

There are several parts of the sanctuary and its services that we will cover. First, there is the structure of the sanctuary. Second, there is the work of the priests. Third, there are the sacrificial offerings. And lastly, there are the special services like the Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement. We will take a quick look at each one of these.

Before there was a sanctuary, there must have been a people to build it. The descendants of Abraham were given the honor of making a sanctuary unto the Lord. Abraham's descendants, later known as Israel, eventually became slaves in Egypt for four hundred years. Through the leadership of Moses and others, the children of Israel were miraculously **freed** by the hand of God.

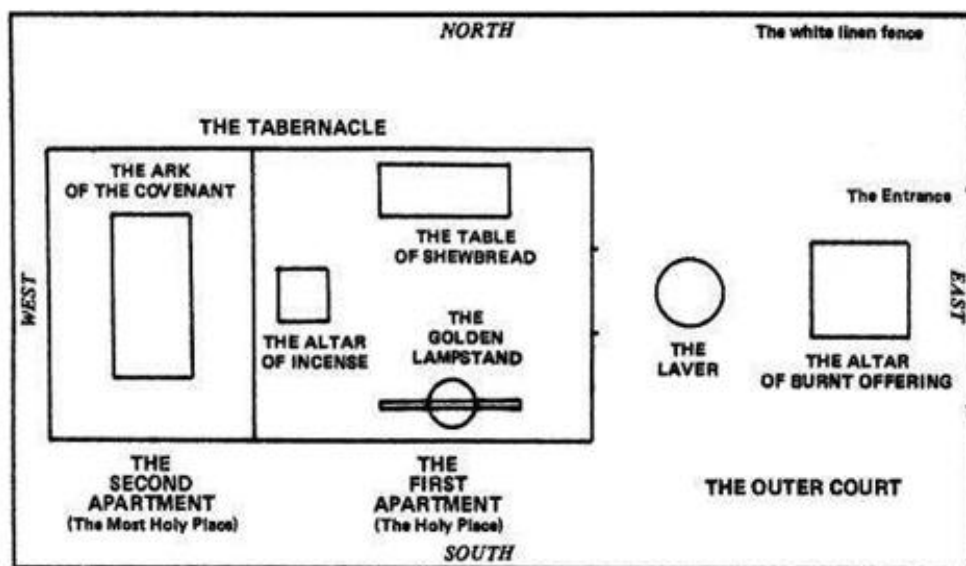
In their wilderness journey towards the Promised Land of Palestine, God would have His people build Him a sanctuary. In vision, Moses was shown the sanctuary in heaven and was given instructions to make a copy of it on earth. See Hebrews 8:1-5. God especially gifted the people to make the sanctuary. Much of the wealth that the Hebrews took with them out of Egypt, in the form of precious metals, linens, and skins, were used to make the sanctuary.

As we have seen, there were three main sections to the structure of the sanctuary. First there was the courtyard which contained the altar of burnt offerings, and the brazen laver. This was where the sacrificial animal was slain. This part of the sanctuary represents being free from the guilt of sin.

The next part was the holy place compartment that contained three pieces of furniture. There was the seven-branched menorah, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense. This section of the sanctuary will teach us how to be free from the sins we just confessed in the courtyard, our known sins.

From the holy place one could enter by faith into the most holy place. Inside this most sacred compartment was found the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark were the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod. Here we will discover how to be free from even our hidden sins.

Freedom from Guilt



The Courtyard: The entire sanctuary was surrounded by a wall of fine linen suspended by pillars of brass. See Exodus 27:9; 38:9. The walls were white. This was to symbolize that we can be covered with the righteousness or purity of Christ. And since walls were necessary in ancient times against invasions, this white wall teaches us that we need the righteousness of Christ to protect us from evil.

The singular entrance into the courtyard was through a veil on the east side. The veil was made of fine linen. The colors of the veil were blue, purple, and scarlet, spun with fine gold wires. See Exodus 38:18; 39:3. The veil represents the humanity of Christ. See Hebrews 10:20. In other words, the way to being free from sin is through Jesus. He is the way. See John 14:6. He is the door. See John 10:7. He is the entrance into eternal life.

The veil into the courtyard was wide and low. It was thirty feet wide. See Exodus 38:18. This wide entrance was to encourage all to come to the sanctuary for repentance. It doesn't matter what you have done nor how many times you have done it, the Lord says, "Come just as you are."

The colors of the veil teach us much about the humanity of Jesus. First, there was the white linen. White represents the spotless or sinless life of Christ. Though our sins be as scarlet, He can make us white as wool. See Isaiah 1:18; Daniel 12:9; Matthew 22:11-14; Revelation 3:5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 15:6.

As saints, we are "made white" by the righteousness of Christ. See Revelation 7:14; Malachi 3:2. We are able to be saved from our sins because Jesus lived a sinless life in our fallen human flesh. He became one of us. He shared in all our sufferings, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. See Hebrews 4:14-16. We should thank Jesus every day that His perfect and sinless life has made eternal salvation available to us.

The color blue represents the unchanging law of God. The people of God wore fringes of blue around the borders of their garments. See Numbers 15:37-41. This was to remind them to do all things in

accordance with God's law. The law of God is an expression or transcript of God's own moral character. If we would be re-created in His image, then we must do that which is according to His perfect will.

The sinless life of Christ and His shed blood did not do away with the law of God. In fact, the death of Christ proves that God's law stands unchanged forever. So we are to be surrounded by the righteousness of Christ (white), and have His law written on our hearts and minds (blue). See Hebrews 8:10; 10:16.

The color scarlet has often been used to represent life, for life is in the blood. See Isaiah 1:16, 17. Hence, scarlet can represent the sacrifice of Christ precious life for us. In addition, scarlet is used to symbolize sin. For example, there is the "great red dragon," and the harlot church "arrayed in purple and scarlet." See Revelation 12:3; 17:4. As we ponder upon the veil, we understand that our sins (scarlet) caused the death or sacrifice (scarlet) of God's dear Son.

It is through Jesus the righteous One (white), who died for our sins (scarlet) that has made salvation possible. In respond to His great love, I chose to obey His will by keeping the Ten Commandments (blue) by His grace.

The color purple is the color of royalty. See Daniel 5:7; Judges 8:26; Luke 16:19; John 19:2. By virtue of His perfect and sinless life (white), and His self-sacrificing love (scarlet), Jesus is worthy to be our King (purple). As our King, we are to keep His law (blue). Scarlet and blue combined make up purple. We testify that Jesus is our King (purple) by accepting both His sacrifice for sin (scarlet) and His perfect law (blue) as the guiding principles of our life.

The color gold represents a godly character. Character is formed by exercising our faith in God. We are motivated to exercise our faith because of His great love for us. See Galatians 5:6. So we might say, gold represents faith that works by love and purifies the character.

We are to have faith in the sinless life of Christ (white), in His perfect law of righteousness (blue), in His shed blood for our sins (scarlet), and to recognize His authority over our lives (purple).

When the penitent sinner came to the courtyard, there was a priest to meet him at the entrance. When the sinner entered the courtyard, he would see the altar of burnt offerings, the laver, and the place where he would need to take the life of the innocent lamb.

The altar of burnt offerings was made of chittim wood covered with copper. It stood three cubits high and five cubits square. See Exodus 27:1. There were four horns, one on each corner of the altar. Horns represent power in the Bible. See Psalm 89:24; 92:10; 132:17; Daniel 7:7, 8, 11, 24. Blood from the sacrifice was sprinkled on the horns of the altar. This was to represent that there is power in the shed blood of Christ. Christ shed His blood that our lives might be empowered by His self-sacrificing life. The greatest power in the world is not positions, possessions, or prestige. It is the power of a humble life that no evil forces can overcome.



The Hebrew word for altar means “place of slaughter.” See Exodus 28:43. The sacrifice was burned until it became ashes. This represents how Christ was slaughtered and became ashes for us. He was willing to give up all for our salvation.

For a while, these ashes were carefully placed before the altar. After a time, the ashes were removed outside the camp of Israel to signify that Christ died for all, both Jew and Gentile. See Hebrews 13:11, 12.

When the penitent came to the entrance the priest would lead him to the place of slaughter. The sinner would place his hands upon the forehead of the lamb and confess his sins leaning upon the lamb. This was to signify that we are to give the entire burden of our sins to Christ. We are not to confess and then bare the burden of our sins. Christ is the burden bearer. He wants us to confess our sins and completely give them to Him. So do not continue to punish yourself after you have confessed. Believe that God has forgiven you.

The penitent would then take a knife and cut the throat of the substitute. See Leviticus 1:5. The priest would catch the blood in a bowl. From there the blood would be sprinkled upon the four horns of the altar of burnt offerings (also known as the altar of sacrifice)

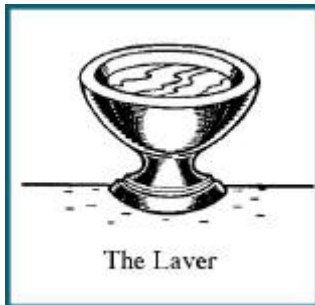
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THE PASSOVER: SLAYING THE PASCHAL LAMB.—V. 10. 16.

This altar of sacrifice represented the cross of Calvary, where Jesus was slain as the Lamb of God. It was here that Jesus bore the penalty for our sins, which is death. He became the Sin-bearer as if He were the guilty one, that we might be treated as the innocent one.

Then there was the laver made of brass/copper. Before the priest could minister in the sanctuary he was required to purify himself at the laver. See Exodus 30:17-21. He would not wash himself in the laver, but would be able to draw water from the laver.



The laver basically had a two-fold ministry. First, it represented the need to be cleansed. And second, it teaches us to be transparent with God.

In order to gain a true conception of our spirituality, we need to see ourselves as we really are. As we look into the reflective nature of the laver we see ourselves. We need to see the dirt in our lives that we may ask God to cleanse us with His Word and the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:3-5. With this desire to be cleansed of all sin, we now have confidence to overcome our known sins.

In summary, the gospel begins with the Holy Spirit moving upon our hearts and convincing us of sin. The penitent sinner then responds by bringing a sacrifice to the sanctuary that he may confess his sins and receive forgiveness.

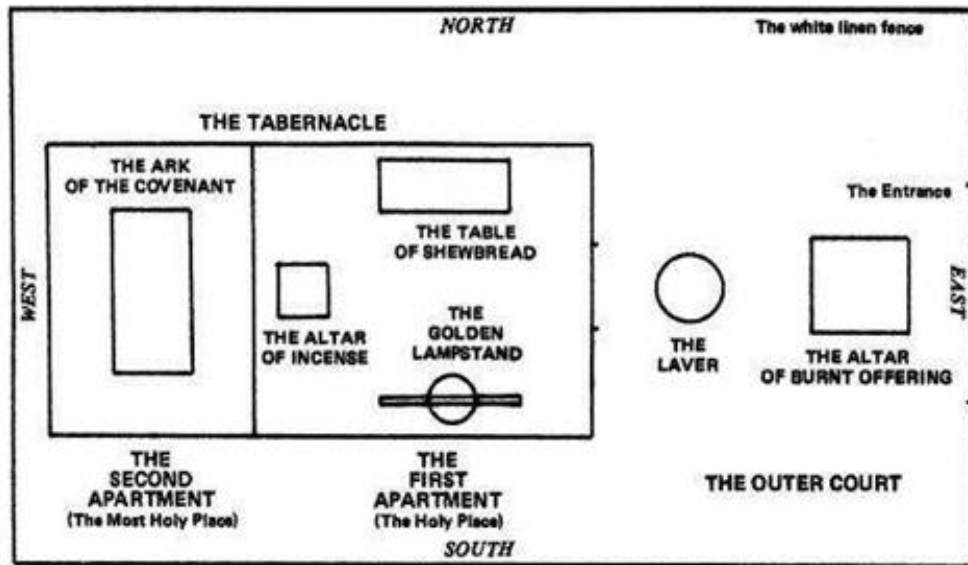
When the penitent confesses his sins upon the sacrifice, his sins have now been transferred from himself to the innocent lamb. Now the lamb, representing Jesus, stands as a sin bearer. It now will pay the penalty for sin, which is death. The life of the lamb is now taken by the penitent, and the blood is caught in a bowl by the priest. From there the blood is sprinkled upon the horns of the altar. The lamb is consumed by the flame upon the altar of burnt offerings. It is a complete sacrifice.

The penitent is now free from guilt. But this is not the end of the gospel. It is the glorious beginning of how God will save us from our sins. Having been forgiven, the sinner now by faith enters into the holy place that he may overcome his known sins.

The Holy Place: Freedom from known sins.

Being free from guilt we now desire to be free from sins we have committed. We are now ready to enter the holy place by faith. We first notice that the entrance into the holy place is narrower and higher than the entrance into the courtyard. This is to teach us that we must now walk the narrow way. But as we do

our spiritual experience will be higher. God does not desire to leave His people simply freed from guilt, but to become overcomers by His grace.



There are three pieces of furniture in the holy place that teach us how to lay hold upon the power of God to overcome all known sins. There is the seven branched candlestick or menorah that teaches us to shine for Jesus. There is the table of showbread that teaches us to partake of Jesus life every day. And there is the altar of incense that teaches us to communion with God in prayer. Take away any one of these three spiritual exercises and you proportional lose power to overcome daily temptations to sin. However, if these three entities are a vital part of your daily experience, then you will be an overcomer. It reminds me that a three stranded cord is not easily broken. See Ecclesiastes 4:12.

Menorah: The menorah was made of gold. It had a central pillar and six branches. See Exodus 25:31, 32. We are the branches and He is the pillar. See John 15. All of us are to have Christ as our Source of life. With Him as the center we are in unity together. It is God's design that we shine together for Christ.



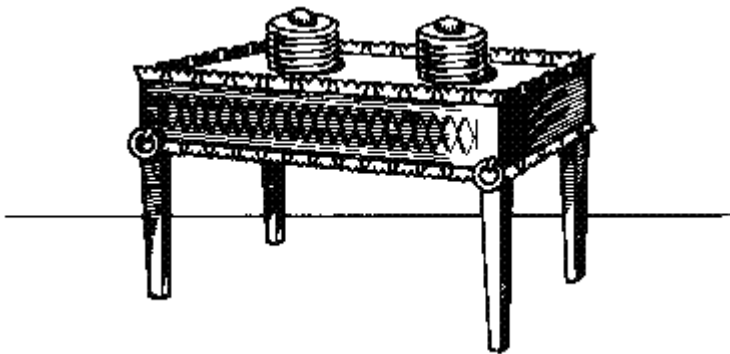
The purpose of the menorah was to provide light in the holy place. This would primarily represent Christ as the light of the world. But secondarily, it symbolizes how we are to shine for Jesus. In fact, sharing Jesus with others is a key factor in overcoming our own sins.

Olive oil was used as fuel for the menorah. See Exodus 27:20, 21; Leviticus 24:2, 3. The menorah being filled with oil represents us being filled with the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 5:18. As we receive fresh supplies of the Holy Spirit we are to constantly shine for Jesus. But when we choose not to share Christ and to shine for Him in good works, then we cut off the supply of oil. We begin to die spiritually. We lose strength and power. We begin to lose the battles against our own sinful natures.

The menorah was made of one talent of gold. This teaches us that we do not need ten talents to shine for Jesus. We need just one. But if we hide that one talent under a bushel we will lose it. See Matthew 5:13-16; 25:14-30. There are many talents that make up the body of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-16. And if we all exercise that talent to further Christ's kingdom, what a glorious experience we can share in shining for Jesus.

Table of Shewbread: Partaking of Christ's life.

The table of showbread was made of shittim wood and overlaid with gold. See Exodus 25:23, 24. It was located on the north side of the holy place, just opposite that of the menorah. See Exodus 40:22-25.



God required that there be twelve loaves of bread upon the table. See Leviticus 24:5. The number twelve is the number of God's kingdom. There were twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles. There are twelve gates to the New Jerusalem. And the city itself has twelve foundations. Each loaf was to be of equal weight and size, signifying that God loves each of us equally.

Jesus is the bread of life. See John 5:32-35, 48-51. And all of us who desire to be in His everlasting kingdom must partake of His life. As we do, we become more like Him. If we do not choose to spend time each day studying the life of Christ with the attitude to follow in His steps, then we will proportionally lose strength to overcome sin in our own life.

What do we receive when we eat the bread of life? This showbread was made of the finest wheat, representing Christ's pure and sinless life. When we partake of Christ's life we are partaking of something that is absolutely perfect. The more we have of Jesus the more we become like Him, perfect in beauty.

Olive oil was added to the dough. See Leviticus 2:4. Oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. When we desire Jesus, and we exercise our faith to be like Him, then we will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Salt was added. See Leviticus 2:13. Salt has a preserving quality. It is only as we partake of His life that we can remain undefiled by the world. Otherwise, we will become corrupted by the evil influences of the world.

We should spend a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the life of Christ, especially the closing scenes of His life. As we do, we shall become like Him, and our love for Him will grow.

Altar of Incense: Communion with God.

The altar of incense was known as the golden altar. It was made of shittim wood and covered with gold. See Exodus 30:1, 3. It stood foursquare, and was two cubits high. See Exodus 30:2. There were four horns on the golden altar, signifying that there is power in prayer.



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The incense that burned on the golden altar spread a wonderful fragrance throughout the whole camp of Israel. In fact, the fragrance spread beyond their encampment. This signifies that prayer has a way of influencing and reaching more people than the ones we pray for. The prayers we have for one person can impact the lives of many.

Prayer is somewhat of a gauge of how much we desire God's presence. We may say that we believe in Him, but if we hardly pray what does that say about our relationship with Him?

If we neglect prayer, we will become spiritually weak. We tend to depend upon our own wisdom and strength, which is insufficient. Each one of us should find a time and place to communion with God each day. Keep that appointment with God, and you will grow in grace.

These three pieces of furniture, representing our shining for Jesus, partaking of His life, and communing with God in prayer are what constitutes spiritual strength to overcome known sins in our life. And it is as

we overcome our known sins that we desire that God reveal to us our hidden sins. And by faith, we desire to enter into the most holy place, that God may make us thoroughly cleansed from all sin.

The Most Holy Place: Freedom from hidden sins

In the most holy place there was one piece of furniture, namely, the ark of the covenant. It was made of wood covered with gold. Inside was contained the ten commandments on two tables of stone, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod. These three items will teach us how to overcome even our hidden sins.

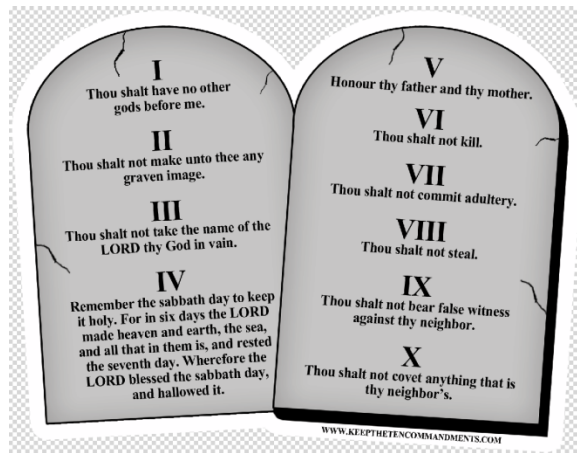


What are hidden sins? These are shortcomings or defects in our character that we are not aware of. Yet they are affecting the way we think and feel. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. If we cannot know our own heart, then there must be things that God must reveal to us. The prayer of David was, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting." Psalm 139:24. Every day we should ask God to reveal what is truly in our heart. When God does reveal these defects of character, we should seek forgiveness and replace those sinful characteristics with the loveliness of Jesus.

Before we look at each of the items found in the ark, we should point out that the shekinah glory of God, His very presence, was in this most holy compartment of the sanctuary. The closer we draw to God the more we will see the defects in our character. As we understand more of His perfection, we will see our imperfection. The good news is that I can forsake my imperfections and give them to Jesus. In return, He gives me His perfection. So it is advantageous to see our imperfections that we may give them up and receive the altogether beautiful life of Christ.

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are a revelation of the will of God. It is a transcript of His moral character. The basis of God's law is love, for God is love.



The unchangeable and perfect law of God is a revealer of sin and righteousness. It tells us what is wrong and what is right. It defines what is evil and what is good. Let us spend a moment explaining each commandment.

First Commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” Exodus 20:3.

The eternal God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all life, is alone worthy of worship. Anything that would lessen our love for God or lessen our service to Him is forbidden. God should have the best of our time and affections. Anything that would lessen our affections for God we do make into a god.

Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the father’s upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” Exodus 20:4-6.

This commandment forbids the worship of images, relics, and figurines. Millions worship images of Mary, saints, and angels. This is all forbidden of God. God alone is worthy of worship. We should not even try to represent God through some material object. It simply lowers man’s conception of God, and therefore, lowers his conception of man. How can we represent the eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God by some material object? We can’t! And God forbids that we should try.

In this commandment we learn that God will not punish the children because their parents’ worshiped idols. However, if the children follow in the footsteps of their parents’ wrongdoing, then they will be held accountable.

It is a solemn thought that we can pass defective traits of character unto our children. Evil and immoral tendencies, and intemperate habits can be passed onto our children genetically. By our own misbehavior we may make our children more susceptible to certain sins. We should be ever so careful about the decisions we make in life. We are not an island unto ourselves.

There is also a blessing to them that do worship God with their whole heart. The blessing comes not only to the worshiper, but also to their descendants. We can pass on godly traits to our children and provide better examples for them to follow.

Third Commandment: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” Exodus 20:7.

This commandment not only forbids swearing with God’s name, but even to use God’s name in a careless way. God’s name should always be uttered with reverence. We can even take God’s name in vain by claiming to be a Christian but not acting like one.

Fourth Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” Exodus 20:8-11.

The Sabbath commandment did not begin at Mount Sinai, but at creation. See Genesis 2:1-3. As a memorial of His created works the Lord established the Sabbath. No other day could rightly represent the works of His hands. The Sabbath begins sunset Friday and continues until sunset Saturday. God has given us six days to labor, but the seventh is for the worship of God. On this day, works of mercy and the care for the sick are permitted. But we are not to be engaged in business affairs. See Isaiah 58:13. If everyone kept the seventh-day Sabbath there would be no atheists.

Fifth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” Exodus 20:12.

God has entrusted children to the care of their parents, as such, parents are entitled to love and respect. Children ought to obey their parents as they are growing up. When parents are older and in need of care, children should do what they can to comfort them.

Sixth Commandment: “Thou shalt not kill” Exodus 20:13.

Any act of murder or the intent to kill is forbidden. All acts of revenge and hate are forbidden. All indulgences and injurious acts that shorten life are forbidden. All unnecessary health hazards due to deprivation and excessive labor are forbidden. Even the neglect to care for the needy and suffering are violations of the sixth commandment.

Seventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” Exodus 20:14.

This would include all acts of sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage between a husband and his wife. Even impure and immoral thoughts are violations of this commandment.

Eighth Commandment: “Thou shalt not steal” Exodus 20:15.

This commandment obviously includes theft and stealing. It also includes slavery and wars of conquest. It requires that you pay fair wages and never take advantage of someone else's ignorance, weakness, or misfortune. There is no overreaching in trade; it demands integrity in all things.

Ninth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" Exodus 20:16.

Any attempt to deceive is included. Any efforts to convey an erroneous impression through false statements, exaggerated details, or even by the suppression of truth is forbidden. Any effort to ruin another person's reputation by misrepresentations is a violation of the ninth commandment. We can be guilty even by our nonverbal expressions; by the looks we give or the intonation of our voice.

Tenth Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's" Exodus 20:17.

Covetousness is selfishness, which is the root of sin. We are not to covet what another person possesses. Instead, we are to be content with what we have. However, we are not to be content with our spiritual condition. We should always desire to be better people who follow the Lord more closely. And if we have Christ, we have that which is most important in life.

It is as we contemplate the deeper meaning of these commandments that God is able to show us defects in our own character. It is when we do not think upon the deeper things of God that we are not able to see ourselves as we really are.

Aaron's rod

Aaron's rod or staff was but a dead stick, but it budded, blossomed, and bore fruit. This is to teach us that we may not only become fruitful in life, but that we must. It is as we are fruitful in the Lord, by our spiritual growth and witnessing, that we are better able to see our defects of character. It is by being involved in life fully that we have greater spiritual eyesight. Take away all fruitfulness and we are blind.

It is interesting to note that Aaron's rod did not have leaves. When we first think of leaves in the Bible, we are taken back to that ancient story of Adam and Eve. When they had sinned, they found themselves naked. To cover their nakedness they tried to cover their shame with a fig leaf garment. In other words, leaves represent our attempt to hide our true condition.

When Jesus saw the fig tree with leaves but no fruit, He cursed it, and the tree withered away. See Matthew 21:18, 19. Those who pretend to be fruitful or who pretend to be good will never see their true condition. To overcome our hidden sins we must be transparent with God. We must open our heart to Him and ask Him to reveal to us our needs. It is impossible to hide anything from God anyway, so why try? We should take advantage of His ability to know all things. If we ask, He will reveal to us our hidden sins that we may overcome them as well.

Jar of Manna

God provided manna for the Hebrews in their wilderness journey so that they would learn to trust Him. In the same way, we must fully trust God. The more we trust Him the more we can see.

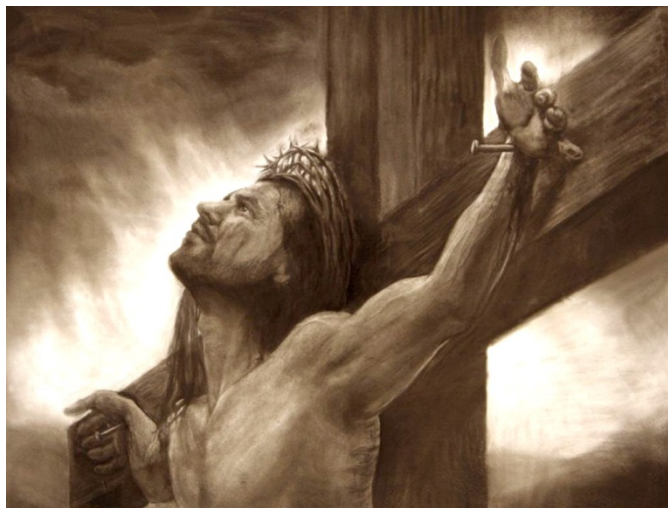
Manna was provided to give the Hebrews a healthful diet. With a better diet they would have purer blood and better circulation, which would aid in clearer thinking. With clearer thoughts and a healthier body we increase our abilities to discern between right and wrong. And we are more likely to make better decisions in life.

The manna fell on every day of the week except on the Sabbath. Hence, a double portion fell on Friday. This was to aid the Hebrews in keeping the Sabbath holy. It reminds us that we are not our own, but that we belong to God. As such, He will provide all that we need. He who created us is more than able to deliver us from our hidden sins. He is able to re-created us into His image.

In summary, we are able to be free from guilt, known sins, and even our hidden sins. I encourage you to study more on the subject of the sanctuary and learn more about God's plan to saved man from both the penalty of sin and from the power of sin.

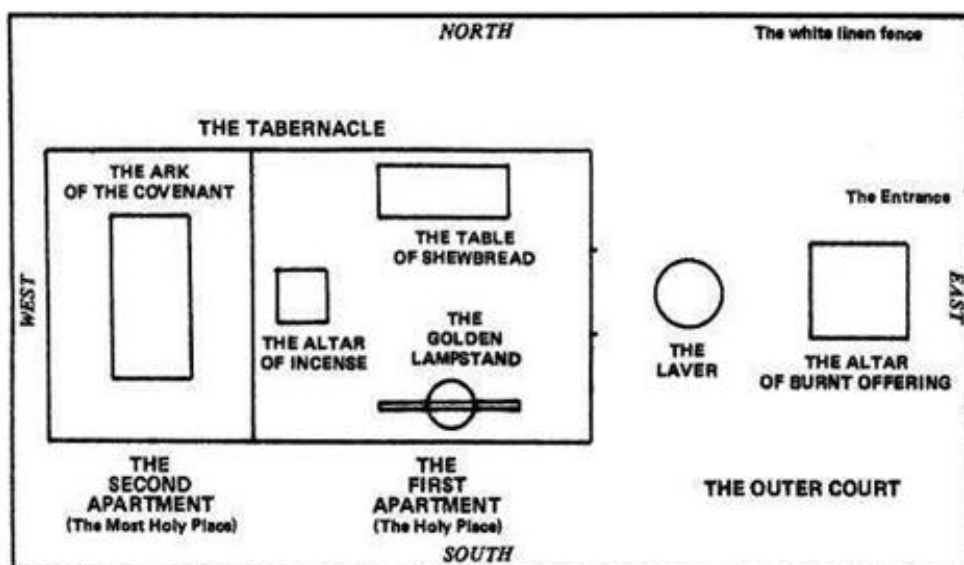
The Feast Days.

The feasts days, like Passover and the Day of Atonement, happened every year, but they would have a future fulfillment in the ministry of Christ. For example, the sacrifice of the lamb from year to year on the feast of Passover, pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God. So what day was Jesus crucified? Jesus was slain as the Lamb of God on the day of Passover. After His death, there was no more need to hold the Passover service. Those yearly Passover services meet their intended fulfillment in the death of Christ.



This would be true of all the other feast days as well. For example, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated every year. It was held fifty days after the feast of Passover. After Jesus died on Passover, what happened fifty days later on the day of Pentecost? This was when the disciples received the pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 1, 2. The feast of Pentecost had now met its intended fulfillment.

But then there was the Day of Atonement. It happened every year. It represented the day when Israel was judged. On this day the sanctuary was cleansed from all the sacrifices that had been brought throughout the year. It was the one day of the year when the high priest would enter into the most holy place compartment. When his work was finished and he left the most holy place the Day of Judgment was over. At this point every case would have been decided. While the high priest was in the most holy place, every Hebrew needed to make themselves right with God and man. If they failed, they were cast out of Israel.



So when would this feast day meet its intended fulfillment? It would be when Jesus would enter into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. As His last work in redeeming man, He opens the books for judgment. When the last case is decided, Jesus will leave the most holy place and prepare to return the second time to receive those who are saved.

Christ came and died as the Lamb of God. He ascended into heavenly as our high priest. He began His work in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. And since 1844, with the fulfillment of the 2300 day prophecy (Daniel 8:14), Jesus has been ministering in the most holy place. Soon Jesus will complete His work and the time of our probation will be over. Every case will be decided for eternal life or the second death. If we follow Jesus through the sanctuary by faith and experience freedom from guilt and freedom from sin, we shall be with Him forever. Amen.

Hebrews Chapter Five

5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

In the first four verse of chapter five, Paul will enumerate some of the qualifications for the appointment of a high priest. First we find that he must be “taken from among men.” The high priest for Israel could not have been an angel. It would have to be someone who was familiar with the frailty and experience of being human.

Second, they are “ordained for men in things pertaining to God.” Their calling is a sacred calling to serve like a mediator between God and the repentant sinner.

Third, he was to “offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” In so doing, the high priest was showing God’s abhorrence of sin and the solution to be both forgiven and cleansed.

5:2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Fourth, the high priest was to show “compassion on the ignorant.” They were to deal gently with those who have fallen prey to sin. Many people have never heard the everlasting gospel and hence do not know the way, they are as Paul says, “out of the way.” But thanks be to God that men who have been misled by others or by their own sinful inclinations can find peace and salvation with God. The high priest is able to have compassion, after all, he too has been “compassed with infirmity.”

5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

Because the earthly high priest was also “compassed with infirmity,” he ought to make an offering for his sins as well. By doing so, this will help him to be a compassionate and understanding high priest.

5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

A fifth qualification is that the high priest is “called of God.” Aaron was chosen of God. The tribe of Levi was chosen of God. And it was God who chose to have the descendants of Levi to serve in the role of the priests of Israel. This does not mean that all these priests were good men; some in fact were terrible men, but God nonetheless set up the Levitical priesthood.

5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

In verses 5-10, Paul will now show that Jesus meets the qualifications for the role of High Priest.

In the time of Christ, the position of high priest had been bought and sold, and at times even acquired by assassination. Men desired the role of high priest to glorify themselves and to gain wealth and notoriety. But “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest.” As Jesus said, “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:” John 8:54

Since the Father appointed Jesus as our High Priest, it demonstrates the love the Father has for us. As Paul wrote, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:19

The phrase “Thou art my Son,” is another reference and proof to the divinity of Christ and hence His superiority to the Levitical priesthood. See Psalm 2:7

5:6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

In this verse, Paul would have us to consider two thoughts. First, there is the declaration that Jesus is the Son of God in verse 5. This is taken from Psalm 2:7, which reads, “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

The second reference is to Jesus as our priest “after the order of Melchisedec.” This is taken from Psalm 110:4, which reads, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Jesus as the Son of God would naturally have the right to approach the Father due to His divinity. As the Son of man, who lived a perfect life in our fallen flesh, Jesus would not be denied any access to the Father. Yet Jesus chose not to glorify Himself, but to wait upon the Father for the approval of His sacrifice for man.

So in verse 5 and 6, we have the Son of God becoming the high priest of our salvation. He comes “after the order of Melchisedec.” Unlike the earthly priesthood that was based upon a bloodline through Aaron, Jesus is appointed high priest because of His perfect life. After all, the name Melchisedec means “king of righteousness.” So Jesus is the high priest of our profession NOT because of genetics, but because of righteousness.

5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

It was Jesus who “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears” in the Garden of Gethsemane. While Jesus prayed that this cup of our indignation might pass from Him, nevertheless He closed with the words “Thy will be done!” It was not the first death that Christ referred to, but the second death in which there is no hope of a resurrection. He was not praying to be saved from death but saved out of death, meaning He prayed for the hope of a resurrection that He might see the Father

again. What this is saying is that Christ was willing to suffer an eternal death for us, whereby He would never see the Father again.

Christ had always been an intercessor for others, but in Gethsemane He sought an intercessor for Himself. However, it was prophesied that He must tread the winepress alone. With all our sins laid upon Christ He must now experience the bitter cup of that separation from God. Before this He had always walked in the presence of His Father; always doing the will of His Father. But now He is the Sin-bearer and cannot see beyond the portals of the tomb. His decision is made, He will die for guilty humanity that we might enjoy the presence of the Father forever.

So when you consider that the earthly high priest had compassion upon the ignorant, in that the earthly high priest himself is familiar with the weakness of human flesh and sin, think now upon the compassion of Christ.

He who knew no sin, became sin for us all. The earthly priest was willing to offer up sacrifices for the ignorant, but Christ was willing to offer up Himself eternally. Now I ask you, Who is the great high priest? It is Jesus. Who is the most loving and compassionate high priest? It is Jesus.

5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Even though Jesus was the Son of God, it became necessary for Him to become one of us. He learned as we must learn. He would learn through suffering, for the path of the just faces many tests and trials in this fallen world. Nay, more than this, the path of the just faces opposition from the evil one and evil men.

Jesus was willing to learn obedience from suffering. He did not turn back and say "This is too difficult." Oh no, He faced the trials and hardships that we must face, and yet He always remained faithful and pure. Jesus is our encouragement to always do the right no matter the consequences.

5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

And because He lived a perfect life in the likeness of our sinful flesh, He became the author of eternal salvation for us who are born with this sinful flesh. Because He lived a sinless life in our sinful flesh, we now know that we can obey Him by following in His steps. This is an important part of God's plan for our eternal salvation.

5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Because He lived this perfect life He has earned the right to be the "high priest after the order of Melchisedec."

5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Spiritual things are spiritually understood. If a man lacks an understanding of God's Word, he will find certain concepts hard to grasp. But as one draws closer in similitude to the character of Christ and has made the Word his foundation for faith and practice, he will have an easier time grasping more difficult sayings.

5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Over a course of time we should be better students of God's Word. Through unnecessary talk and the folding of hands we have lost valuable time in our understanding of God's Word and in our spiritual growth in Christ. Our failure to build on what we know makes it necessary to go back and relearn many lessons. Had we added to our faith every day we would be teachers of God's Word

5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

The milk of God's Word is not bad, but we should have grown up to eat more solid food from God's Word. We are not to remain as babes in Christ, but to grow up into full maturity in Christ Jesus. The man who is "unskillful in the word of righteousness" may know little about righteousness, but he can and should know more.

5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

As we study through the book of Hebrews, Paul is preparing us for some "strong meat." He wants to encourage us to get off the milk and to dig deeper into God's Word. We are not to remain as babes in Christ; we are to grow and mature. As we do, we will be better able to discern between good and evil. We will have clearer spiritual eyesight, clearer perceptions of truth, and a greater knowledge of the true nature of Christ's work for us as our High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Hebrews Chapter Six

6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Paul says, "Therefore," based on what we have studied in chapter five, we are going to leave "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," the elementary doctrines of the Christian faith, and we will dig deeper into God's Word that we may "go on unto perfection." Paul had mentioned that many of them were still on milk when it came to their Christian walk. They needed to begin to eat the meat of the Word that they might mature in Christ Jesus. We all begin at the beginning, but we are to move forward. We are not to remain as babes, rather, we are to grow up as mature followers in Christ.

Paul will briefly mention six of the elementary "principles of the doctrine of Christ," and then move us into the meat of his message in the book of Hebrews. The first elementary doctrine of Christ is "repentance from dead works."

What is true repentance?

Consider these words from the SOP:

"How shall a man be just with God? How shall the sinner be made righteous? It is only through Christ that we can be brought into harmony with God, with holiness; but how are we to come to Christ? Many are asking the same question as did the multitude on the Day of Pentecost, when, convicted of sin, they cried out, "What shall we do?" The first word of Peter's answer was, 'Repent.' Acts 2:37, 38. At another time, shortly after, he said, 'Repent, . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.' Acts 3:19. Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life. There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin. Such was the grief of Esau when he saw that the birthright was lost to him forever." Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 23

"The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, 'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.

"Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts.

“Jesus has said, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.’ John 12:32. Christ must be revealed to the sinner as the Saviour dying for the sins of the world; and as we behold the Lamb of God upon the cross of Calvary, the mystery of redemption begins to unfold to our minds and the goodness of God leads us to repentance. In dying for sinners, Christ manifested a love that is incomprehensible; and as the sinner beholds this love, it softens the heart, impresses the mind, and inspires contrition in the soul.

“It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and the outward life is amended. And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, ‘What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim? Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation, demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?’

“The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son.” Ibid., 26, 27

The second elementary doctrine of Christ is “faith toward God.” We have in the book of Hebrews the famous faith chapter in chapter eleven. In this verse, Paul tell us to have faith “toward” God. We are forgiven of our past, but we are to look forward by faith. Not faith in ourselves, but faith “toward” God.

In the following Spirit of Prophecy statement we find that faith is a gift from God, and that we must exercise our faith that we might be sanctified. “It is impossible to please God without the exercise of genuine, sanctifying faith. We are individually responsible for our faith. True faith is not a faith that will fail under test and trial; it is the gift of God to His people. --The Review and Herald, Sept, 30, 1909.” Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Volume 2, 375

In Romans Paul writes, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:16, 17. Our faith is in the righteousness of God. More than that, we have faith that the righteousness of God may be manifested through us. This is true and sanctifying faith.

6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

The third elementary doctrine of Christ is “the doctrine of baptisms.” Paul is most likely referring to the rite of baptism by immersion. However, we are aware that John the Baptist mentioned two baptisms,

saying, "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Mark 1:8. Jesus spoke to His disciples after His resurrection, saying, "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 1:5

We are to follow the instructions of water baptism by immersion which represents our desire to be dead to the old life and then raised up into newness of life. In fact, the rite of baptism is more of a declaration that this change has already taken place. The rite is therefore our desire to publicly confess our faith in Jesus as both Redeemer and Lord.

The fourth elementary doctrine of Christ is the "laying on of hands." In the early church, the apostles would lay their hands upon the individual who was baptized.

As it is written, "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts 8:15-17

"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 19:7 And all the men were about twelve." Acts 19:4-7

During Old Testament times, the laying on of hand was associated with offering a blessing upon someone and for anointing someone to an office. See Genesis 48:9-14; Number 8:10, 11; Deut 34:9. Today we often find the laying on of hands associated with those who are becoming elders in the local church.

The fifth elementary doctrine of Christ was concerning the "resurrection of the dead." We know that there are two resurrections, as Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 5:29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29.

The apostle John spoke of these two resurrections as being a thousand years apart. See Revelation 20. This is an important and fundamental doctrine to keep the Christian community from embracing the dangerous error of the immortality of the soul.

The sixth elementary doctrine of Christ is the "eternal judgment." This doctrine not only tells us that there will be a judgment, but that the effects or results of the judgment are eternal. The saved will receive eternal life, and the unconverted will experience the "second death," eternal death, which is the lake of fire. See Revelation 20:14, 15

6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.

These are the six fundamental and elementary doctrines of Christ, which the Christian will always build upon. But now it is time in Paul's discourse in the book of Hebrews to go deeper in our understanding of God's Word.

6:4,5 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

This has been a difficult saying for many, and not a few have left the faith in discouragement never to return. But I would understand Paul to say, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, if they continue to reject the work of the Holy Spirit upon their life." It is possible for men to fall away and then return unto the Lord. After all, John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.... My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2

If any man will confess his sins to Jesus, whether he has been a believer in the past or not, then God will forgive him and cleanse him. "If ANY man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

But we should understand the seriousness of the passage. We are describing a man who has been "enlightened." He was truly converted. He had tasted of the heavenly gift in receiving the Holy Spirit into his life. He knew what it was like to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. He experienced the power of God's Word in his life. He perhaps was involved in the workings of miracles and healings. For such a man to turn away from Jesus is a very serious matter.

But such a situation is not hopeless. The only way it would be impossible for him to return would be his constant rejection of the appeals of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. God will not force the will. God will not force him to repent. However, if this man continues to resist the drawing power of the Holy Spirit, there is nothing more God can do. The man will remain lost.

6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

The Jews played an unfortunate part in the crucifixion of Christ by their rejection of Him. We "crucify... the Son of God afresh" by our continued life of sin. We have to be so ever careful, if we choose to keep on sinning we may never choose to come back to the Lord. We may never again desire spiritual things. It is possible for a man to have tasted of the Lord and to apostatize in such a manner that he has no more interest following Christ.

6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

But he who receives the refreshing of the Holy Spirit, like the refreshing of the rain upon the dry ground, he shall bear fruit unto the glory of God.

6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

But there are members in the church, while receiving the goodness of God, still have not been fruitful unto God. They want to be blessed of God, they want to be in heaven, but they are not willing to bear the fruit of a Christlike character. If we only produce thorns and briers in the life, we will face the second death.

6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

From verses 4-9, Paul spoke with tough love. He was very straight forward. Now he softens his words and encourages them that he is “persuaded” of “better things” from them. He is not suggesting that they have reached the point of no return, but he clearly warns them that it is possible that a man may drift so far from the Lord that he may never choose to return.

6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

We are not saved by these works of love, but we are to be God’s workmanship. In the hands of the Potter, He will fashion us and mold us into a life of good works. And all of these good works are recorded. Every kind look, every kind word, and every kind deed is recorded in the books of heaven. As Jesus said, “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” Matthew 10:42. See also Matthew 25:31-40

6:11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Things that are associated with the word “diligence” are persistence, painstaking effort, to choose, and love. We are to move forward in faith and good works. We are to move forward in “the full assurance of hope unto the end.” We are never to give up or to give in. We are to cross the finish line. Every journey begins with the first step, but we must get to our destination. We do so with full cooperation with heavenly agencies. We can be assured that heaven will do its part, but we must persevere and choose to move forward. Will we do so with our hearts full of hope and love?

6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Do not be “slothful” but be “diligent.” Do not crawl but run. Do not put spiritual things last but first. Be “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Chapter eleven of Hebrews

provides us with great examples of those who lived by faith and had truly entered into that spiritual rest. Patiently they endured many tests and trials. By faith they looked for a better country. By faith they depended upon Him who created all things. By faith they looked to the Messiah to come that would take away the sins of the world. They shall receive the promise of eternal life.

6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

In the first promise to Abraham, the Lord said unto him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 12:1-3

It was at the time when Abraham was willing to offer his only son in obedience to God's command, that the Lord swore by Himself, and said, "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 22:18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Genesis 22:16-18

6:14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."

The phrase "blessing I will bless" gives emphasis to the certainty of God's blessings to Abraham and to all who live by faith. "Multiplying I will multiply" is again an emphasis on the verb or the action God will take in multiplying the descendants of Abraham as the stars of heaven.

6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Twenty-five years had passed from the time God made the promise to Abraham and Sarah giving birth to Isaac. There were times when Abraham's faith seemed to diminish, but in the end, Abraham believed God. When Abraham lifted up the knife to slay Isaac according to God's command, never had he exercised any greater faith. He knew that God would keep His promise that through Isaac there would be a great nation. As it is written, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Hebrews 11:17-19

6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Men will swear by someone greater than themselves. In ancient times, some would swear in the name of their gods. When we take the judicial oath we say that we will tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth "so help me God."

We can swear by no greater name than that of God's name. However, men may break an oath and men may lie. God cannot lie, it is against His nature. His promises and His oaths are sure. And the promise God gave to Abraham was not only met in the birth of Isaac, but it was truly filled in God giving His only Son, as Paul wrote, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Galatians 3:16

6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

God did not need to swear by His name, but He did. God's Word is always sure. His counsel is "immutable" or unchanging, because His divine purpose is absolutely perfect.

6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

The two immutable things are God's promises and His oaths. God's promises are sure. But man often battles with doubt and so God confirms His promises with an oath to help man to "lay hold upon the hope set before" him. God not only promised to send His only Son into the world, He gave an oath to that fact. We can and should take comfort in all that God has promised. If He promises to forgive us of our sins, then we must believe God.

Please prayerfully consider this argument: If God promised to give His Son as a sacrifice for our sins and also confirmed that with an oath, and if all the promises of God are centered in His Son, then all of God's promises are confirmed with an oath. Dear reader, His promises are sure even without an oath. But in confirming His promise of sending His only Son with an oath, will He not keep every other promise?

The expression "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope" has reference to the horns on the tabernacle. If a man felt that he needed to flee for his life, then he would go and hold onto the horns of the altar and feel safe. There is safety in Him who is the Horn of our Salvation. There is safety and security in the shed blood of Christ. After all, if He was willing to die for our sins as He had promised, will He not keep all His other promises?

6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

As an anchor holds the ship at sea, so will our hold on Christ keep us from drifting aimlessly. Our anchor, Christ Jesus, is also the veil. See Hebrews 10:20. Because He became a man and lived a perfect life in our sinful flesh, we have an anchor "sure and stedfast" in the forgiveness of sins and the freedom from sin. The veil into the courtyard represented freedom from guilt, the sure promise of forgiveness. The veil into the holy place represented freedom from our known sins, the sure promise of power over sin. The veil into the most holy place represented freedom from our hidden sins, the sure promise of God in bringing the saints to full maturity.

6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

While we have confidence in His promises, our confidence and hope is increased as we consider that Jesus, our great high priest, has already entered into the heavenly sanctuary. He is our forerunner who is preparing a place for us. And where He is we shall be. He has gone before us to the Father, and soon we shall see the Father because He is our great high priest “after the order of Melchisedec,” the king of righteousness.

Hebrews Chapter Seven

7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

In chapter one, we saw that Jesus is fully divine; He is the express image of the Father. In chapter two, we saw that Jesus became fully man. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man because He is the Son of God who became the Son of man. We have learned that Jesus is greater than the angels, He is greater than Moses, and now we will discover in this chapter that His priesthood is superior to that of Melchisedec. In fact, Paul will enumerate a number points that show how Christ is truly our great High Priest.

The name “Melchisedec” means king of righteousness. He was the “king of Salem,” or the king of Peace. He was also the “priest of the most high God” who blessed Abraham when he returned from his victory in saving Lot.

7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Abraham gave his tithe to Melchisedec because he felt Melchisedec was worthy of receiving tithe. After all, he was the “priest of the most high God,” who ruled in righteousness as the king of Salem, the king of peace. He is a type of Jesus, as Jesus is the great High Priest of the Christian faith, the Prince of Peace, and King of kings and Lord of lords who rules in righteousness.

7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Some have interpreted the phrase “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life” as referring to Melchisedec as some supernatural personage. The

phrase that he was “made like unto the Son of God” does not mean that he was the Son of God, but that he was “made.”

Christ was “made” sin for us that we “might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21. In the book of Hebrews, Jesus was “made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest,” that we might be “made partakers of Christ” and His righteousness. Hebrews 2:17; 3:14. We know that the Father was not made like Jesus, nor was the Holy Spirit. The Godhead consists of three distinct personalities that are one in purpose; whereby all Three possess absolute perfection. Therefore, Melchisedec was not the Father, Son, or the Holy Spirit.

The phrase that he was “without father,” and “without mother” means that his parentage had no bearing on him in becoming the priest of the most high God. He did not become a priest like the Levites because of a family bloodline. Oh, no, he became the priest of the most high God because of his righteous life.

We had learned earlier that a high priest must be “taken from among men.” Hebrews 5:1. Therefore, Melchisedec could not have been an angel or one of the Three Persons of the Godhead. Even the Son of God could not become the high priest of the Christian faith unless He became a man.

7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Melchisedec must have been a great man since the patriarch Abraham gave him tithe. We all know how great a man Abraham was; he is the father of the faithful. So if the father of the faithful gave tithes to Melchisedec, imagine how great Melchisedec must be!

If Melchisedec is so great, and Jesus is greater than Melchisedec, then imagine how great Jesus must be as our great High Priest.

7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

The Levites received tithe according to the law, “And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.” Numbers 18:21

The Levites were not the first to receive tithe; Melchisedec received tithe before them. Melchisedec did not receive tithe as the result of the law; he received tithe because he was righteous. This makes Melchisedec greater than the Levitical priesthood. After all, not all the priests who received tithe were righteous men. So if Melchisedec is greater than the Levitical priesthood, and Jesus is greater than Melchisedec, then imagine how much greater Jesus must be than the Levitical priesthood!

7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

God made His promises to Abraham, this would make Abraham greater than the Levitical priesthood. So if Abraham gave his tithes to Melchisedec, then the descendants of Abraham would have given their tithes to Melchisedec.

7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

If Melchisedec blessed Abraham, then Melchisedec is greater than Abraham. If Abraham is greater than the Levitical priesthood, then imagine how much greater Melchisedec is than the Levitical priesthood. This would make Jesus exceedingly greater than the Levitical priesthood.

7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

The Levitical priesthood received tithes. These Levitical priests lived and died having received tithes. Now imagine how much greater Jesus is. First, He is after the order of Melchisedec because of righteousness. Second, He liveth forever. We serve a great High Priest who ever makes intercession for us.

7:9, 10 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

If Abraham is the father of the faithful, including the Levites, then whatever Abraham did, so did his descendants. In this way, Levi also paid tithes to Melchisedec "in Abraham."

7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

If the ceremonial law and the sanctuary services could make a man perfect then there would be no need for "another priest....after the order of Melchisedec." But the earthly sacrifices of lambs did not make Israel perfect, after all, Paul has made it abundantly clear that ancient Israel did not enter into that spiritual rest; they were far from being perfect. Hence, there was the need for "another priest."

The Hebrew economy was never intended to be an end, but a foreshadowing of what was to come. All those little lambs pointed to the Lamb of God. The work of the priests pointed to the work of our great high priest, Jesus Christ. The entire sanctuary was anointed pointing to the Messiah to come.

If Melchisedec was righteous, as is expressed in his name, then we would of necessity need someone after the order of Melchisedec.

7:12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

The Levitical priests became the priests of God due to the law. The law had said that the tribe of Levi would serve as the priests in the sanctuary. So if there is a change in the priesthood, then there must

also be a change in the law that appointed them to such a role. Of course, we are not speaking about the Ten Commandments, but the ceremonial law given to Moses.

7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

The law specifically pointed to the tribe of Levi as the priests of the sanctuary. No other tribe attended at the altar.

7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

We all know that Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah. Moses said nothing of Judah concerning the priesthood. But David referred to the priesthood of Melchisedec, saying, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalm 110:4. Psalm 110 is a Messianic psalm pointing to Jesus as both King and Priest. Melchisedec was a king and priest. None of the Levitical priests became kings, and none of the kings of Israel became priests. Not only was Melchisedec both a king and a priest, but he is a type of Jesus who is our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary and the King of the entire universe. In this way, the order of Melchisedec is greater than the Levitical order.

7:15, 16 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

As the Levitical priesthood was inferior to the order of Melchisedec, so the law pointing to the Levites gave way to the prophecy concerning the Messiah as coming "after the similitude of Melchisedec."

Jesus did not become of High Priest because of the flesh, but because of His righteous life. Therefore, the "carnal commandment" that pointed to the loins of Levi gave way to the prophetic word and the "endless life" of Jesus our Lord and Savior.

7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

If there were to be a great high priest, then there needed to be Someone who was greater than the sons of Levi. The sons of Levi were born and they died. They were not priests "forever." By necessity we needed a high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. This great high priest would not come from the loins of Levi, but according to the order of Melchisedec.

Our great high priest would not be succeeded by a descendant. Our great high priest must live forever.

7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The Levitical priests could not make you perfect and the endless sacrifices they offered could not make you perfect. They were never intended to. Rather, they pointed forward to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. It pointed to our great High Priest who is able to succor them that come to Him by faith. Therefore, it was essential that the shadow gave way to the true. The earthly sanctuary must give way to the heavenly which does take away sin and makes perfect.

7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The law cannot make you perfect. The sacrifice of a million lambs cannot make you perfect. The law will bring you to Christ—your need of the Savior. See Galatians 3:24. But the law cannot change you, but the Savior can.

Jesus, the great High Priest, has brought to us a “better hope.” He has entered into the heavenly sanctuary in the very presence of the Father for us. He offers His own perfect blood on our behalf. He pleads our case as One who has never sinned. He lived the life, and now offers us that life through the work of the Holy Spirit. We have hope that we can now be made perfect as “we draw nigh unto God” through our Lord Jesus Christ.

7:20, 21 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

None of the Levitical priests were appointed by an oath. But in the case of Jesus, the “Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” If God gave an oath to the appointment of Jesus as our High Priest, then that is far superior to that of the Levitical priesthood.

God would not repent or regret His decision in appointing Jesus as our High Priest. The cost was high. It would involve the death of His Son, Jesus would always bear the human form, and man would now become an heir of God and joint heir with Christ. The capital of the universe would now be established in the Earth made new. God did all this because He loves us.

7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

“By so much” refers to the high cost of our salvation and the fact that God not only made a promise to give His only Son, but He also made an oath. Jesus is our surety. Because He became a man and lived a perfect life in our sinful flesh we have more than hope, we have “surety of a better testament.” If God has already fulfilled His covenant agreement in sending His own Son to die for our sins, will He not also keep His covenant in appointing Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary?

7:23, 24 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Under the Levitical system there were many priests because they could only serve for a short time due to death. After they died, another priest would need to take his place. "But this man," Jesus Christ, because He ever liveth "hath an unchangeable priesthood." This of course would also make Christ's priesthood far superior to that of the Levitical priesthood.

7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

While the Levitical priests could not make any one perfect, Jesus is able to save to the "uttermost." He is able to forgive the sinner, He is able to cleanse him from all unrighteousness, He is able to make him whole, and to give him eternal life.

7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Our high priest who is able to save to the uttermost is "holy." His character is absolute perfection, and His thoughts absolute purity. He is "harmless." He inspired hope in the most unpromising of men. He saw men and women as they could be. He mingled with men as one who desire their good. He healed the sick and passed by no human being as worthless. He is "undefiled." His presence is always one of purity and innocence. He is "separate from sinners." He sought to save all men and He would mingle with them as one who desired their good, but He would not participate in their sins. He was "made higher than the heavens." He is above all creatures for He created them all. He is higher than all other principalities and powers, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He sits at the right hand of the Father. Indeed, we have such a great High Priest.

7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

The Levitical priests offered up sacrifices daily. Since the high priest officiated over them, it could be said that he daily offered up sacrifices. The high priest on the Day of Atonement made an offering for his own sins, then he made an offering for the sins of the people. See Leviticus 16:11, 15.

Christ does not make daily sacrifices in the heavenly sanctuary. He needed to die for our sins, but He died once and for all. It is His own blood that He pleads on behalf of the sinner, but He does not have to die again for each person who repents.

If the earthly high priest had to make an offering for his own sins, then how did Jesus make such an offering since He never sinned? When He bore our sins in His own body, He received them as if He was the guilty party that we might be forgiven and treated as if we had never sinned. He became sin for us. What a wonderful High Priest who became sin for us and "offered up Himself."

7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The ceremonial law made the Levites priest in the earthly sanctuary. These many priests had infirmities, they were sinners in need of a Savior. But “the Son” never did sin. He needed no Savior, rather, He became the Savior. What a difference between the Levitical priests and Jesus our High Priest.

While the Levitical priests only served temporarily, Jesus is our High Priest “consecrated for evermore.” With the death of Christ came the end of the earthly sacrificial system. Type had met antitype. The earthly pointed to the heavenly. With Jesus’ death as the Lamb of God and His ascension into heaven as our High Priest, the laws that governed the Levitical system came to an end, and the order of Melchisedec took its place. Praise God!

Hebrews Chapter Eight

8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

In the first five verses of chapter eight, Paul will focus on the superiority of Christ’s High Priestly ministry. Then the discussion will turn to the better promises and sacrifices due to Christ’s priestly ministry. All of this will help us to better understand the new covenant, whereby God will write His law upon our hearts and mind.

This “is the sum, we have such an high priest.” All that has been argued so far is to prove the superiority of Christ’s priestly ministry. He is such a high priest “who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” while the Levitical priesthood was here on the earth. What a difference! Therefore, Jesus is no ordinary high priest, He is the great High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Jesus is not simply sitting at the right hand of the Father, He is the “minister of the sanctuary.” Our great High Priest is ministering on our behalf in the sanctuary above. The Heavenly Sanctuary is the “true tabernacle” of which the earthly was but a miniature copy. The Lord made the Heavenly Sanctuary, not man. Now consider the difference between these two sanctuaries. The heavenly is made by God where millions of angels adorn and worship God. See Daniel 7:9, 10. While the earthly is beautiful, the heavenly is so vast and spectacular. It is here in the heavenly that Jesus ministers for us.

8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

The work of the priests in the sanctuary was to offer gifts and sacrifices. Therefore, for Jesus to **minister** in the Heavenly Sanctuary He must have something to offer, otherwise He could not **serve** as a high priest.

8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

While on earth, Jesus would not have been an earthly high priest since He was not from the tribe of Levi. So when was Jesus our High Priest? In His official capacity it would be when He had something to offer. Therefore, He must have first become the Lamb of God before He could offer His own shed blood. But His preparation for the role as High Priest would begin with His ministry. Consider the connection between His earthly experience and His preparation as our High Priest.

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”
Hebrews 2:17, 18

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”
Hebrews 4:14-16

It is true that Christ’s work was in two phases. He was the Lamb of God while here on earth. This was prefigured and represented by the altar of sacrifice found in the courtyard. He ascended into heaven as our High Priest in the next phase of His ministry. In the Heavenly Sanctuary there are two compartments just as there were two compartments in the earthly sanctuary. Jesus would first minister in the Holy Place from 31 AD to 1844 AD, as the earthly priest ministered in the holy place during the religious year. Then with the fulfillment of the 2300 day prophecy ending in 1844 AD, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary to complete His work as our High Priest. In the same way, on the last day of the religious year, the earthly high priest entered the most holy place to cleanse it from all the sins that had been confessed throughout the year. It was a time of judgment. In the same way, Jesus has now entered into a time of judgment in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary.

8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

The earthly was a “shadow” of the heavenly. The only time you have a shadow is if there is the real. The only way the earthly sanctuary could be a “shadow” is if there is a very real heavenly sanctuary.

The earthly is an “example” or copy of the heavenly. While the earthly helps us to understand the physical nature of the heavenly, it was the daily and yearly functions of the high priest in the earthly that would help us to understand the work of Jesus as our high priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Moses was indeed shown the heavenly sanctuary of which he was to make a miniature on earth “according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.”

8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

As the real is better than the shadow, so is Christ’s ministry greater or better than the Levitical.

He is the Mediator of a better covenant. A covenant is between two or more persons. In this case, there is a covenant between God and man. Jesus is truly the one and only true Mediator who can represent God to man, and He can represent man to God. He is the only one that can do this. As such, He is “the Mediator of a better covenant.” The term “better” does not mean that the old covenant was bad, rather, the new covenant is better. So in what way is the new covenant better than the old covenant?

Certainly there is no fault with God in the old covenant. God has always done His part. But man failed in the old covenant in that man did not fulfill his part. So now we are in need of a better covenant which is based on better promises. But better promises by whom? By God? By man? Or both?

8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

If the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificing of lambs could have made men perfect, then there would have been no need for the second covenant. Remember, eternal life is based upon two conditions, namely, obedience and faith. Had Adam and Eve remained faithful there would have been no sin in our little world. When they failed to obey, they then needed a Savior. More than this, there needed to be a Second Adam. Someone must come and show that man could keep God’s commands that man might have an opportunity to be redeemed. God covenanted to send His only Son to die for the sins of humanity and to live a perfect life on our behalf. Through His shed blood there is the forgiveness of sin. Through His perfect life there is the power to be recreated in the image of God.

God has kept His part in the covenant. He has sent His Son to die for the sins of the world. And He has sent the Holy Spirit that we might live new lives in perfect obedience to His law.

8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

The new covenant is the same as the everlasting covenant, which makes it older than the old covenant. This everlasting covenant was made to Adam in Eve, where God promised, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15. God not only promised to forgive us of our sins but to place an enmity between us and sin. Man would first need to be forgiven for his transgression of God’s law. Then, secondly, man would need a new heart that was in perfect harmony with the divine will. The work of the Holy Spirit, which is to lead men to repentance and to give them the power to overcome sin, has been available from day one.

The old covenant interestingly enough came 2500 years later at Mount Sinai. You might ask, “Why would an old and ineffective covenant come into play if there was already an everlasting covenant in operation from the time of Adam and Eve?”

God never intended that there would be an old covenant. This was all of man’s doing. So what happened? Verse 8 tells us that the fault was “with them,” God’s professed people. They promised to keep God’s commands and failed. “And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.” Exodus 19:7, 8

What did the people promise to do? They promised to do all that the Lord commanded. Could the people keep all of God’s commandments without the aid of the Holy Spirit? No. Could they keep all that God commanded with the power of the Holy Spirit? Yes. So what was the problem? The people tried to keep the commandments in their own strength and failed. So was the problem with God? No. With the Holy Spirit? No. With the commands of God? No. With the people? Yes.

What did the people understand? They understood the importance of obedience. So what was the problem? They did not know how to be obedient. This is well expressed by the words of Paul in describing the unconverted state of the man in Romans chapter seven, saying, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good...For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin...For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” Romans 7:12, 14, 18. As a Hebrew of Hebrews, Paul knew that the law was spiritual, holy, just, and good. He “willed” to keep it, but he did not know how “to perform that which is good,” in his unconverted state.

What was missing? They need a new heart. Only those who are converted by the power of the Holy Spirit can keep God’s law. So if God knew they would fail in their own strength, then why did He let them fail? He did not want them to fail. He did not want them to attempt this in their own strength. However, if they insisted on doing it on their own He must let them. He must give them the opportunity to fail. He would not cause them to fail, but He must allow them to exercise their freedom of choice.

Did God cast away His people because they failed in this covenant agreement? The answer is “No.” Would God then change His law? No. So what could God do? If the new covenant is the everlasting covenant, and the new covenant is the better covenant, then the everlasting covenant is the better covenant. Therefore, the better promises are promises that God has already made from the beginning, but which man has failed to receive.

When God created Adam and Eve, He created them in His image with a love for righteousness. They were created perfect. The law was already written in their hearts. But through sin the nature of man changed. He was now at enmity with God and His law. What could God do? He would have to give man a new nature that man may choose to lovingly keep His commandments.

However, there was a problem, namely, the wages of sin is death. Man must die because he transgressed God's law. What is the solution? There was only one way to save the human race. The Son of God would have to come and take man's place as the Substitute for the sins of the world. So the Father covenanted to send His only Son into the world "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this way, man might be free from the penalty of the law, which is death. This is the covenant of mercy. The sinner would be given a second trial. Without Christ's sacrifice there would have been no hope for the human family. But with Christ's death man has hope to be redeemed.

But man needed something more. Obedience was required of Adam to remain in the Garden. The repentant sinner, due to the covenant of mercy, now stands innocent before God as if he had never sinned. But he is weak. How can he now live in accordance to God's commandments as was required of Adam when he stood innocent before God? It is by the power of the Holy Spirit. This power has always been available to God's people. But men seem drawn to forms and ceremonies. But all the sacrifices, offerings, pilgrimages, repetitive prayers, and such, can never change the heart, or give man the power to live a life in accordance with God's perfect will. The coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His perfect and sinless life in the Spirit has shown us the way.

We see in Jesus the fulfillment of God's everlasting covenant with man. We see the forgiveness of sins with the crucifixion of Christ. We see the enmity toward sin. We see the power of the Holy Spirit in His life. We see a life in perfect accordance with the Ten Commandments. We can see it all in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, our great High Priest. In Him we see the promise of power from above. We can now see what God's everlasting covenant is all about, which is perfect harmony with the will of God by the power of God.

8:9 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 continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Ancient Israel did not live by the everlasting covenant that God had made with Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham. Oh sure, they offered sacrifices, paid tithe, and refused to do any secular work on the Sabbath. They did all the outward forms. But they did not have a new heart. They depended upon their own works of righteousness, which could never atone for sin.

8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

God desired such a covenant with ancient Israel. But it would be spiritual Israel, the church, that God would be able to make this new covenant. The very commandments that He wrote with His own finger on two tables of stone, He would now write upon the hearts and mind of His people. He would be there God in giving them all the power to obey. They shall be His people as they acknowledge His authority in their life.

8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

One of the great principles of the Protestant Reformation was the priesthood of all believers. Every one of us has direct access to the throne of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Levitical priesthood has come to an end. There are no more human intermediaries pointing to the one and true Mediator. Christ alone is our true and only Mediator to the Father.

8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

When the penitent sinner has asked for the forgiveness of sins, he may know that he is forgiven. No longer is he to be burdened by the guilt of these confessed sins. He has given them to Jesus and Jesus has gloriously taken them.

8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

The new covenant which is the everlasting covenant has replaced the old covenant. The old covenant was decaying in the early church as more and more believers began to understand more fully God's everlasting covenant and Christ's work in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Soon the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the old system of earthly sacrifices and offerings would completely vanish.

Hebrews Chapter Nine

9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

So far Paul has been arguing that Jesus is our great High Priest who is superior to the angels, to Moses, to the Levitical priests, and to Melchisedec. Paul will now focus on the sanctuary services, comparing the earthly with the heavenly.

"The first covenant" is in reference to the one God made with Israel on Mount Sinai. The phrase "a worldly sanctuary" would be better translated as "a sanctuary in the world" or the one here on Planet Earth. This implies of course that there is a Heavenly Sanctuary.

Paul's point is that if the earthly sanctuary had "ordinances of divine service," so does the Heavenly Sanctuary.

9:2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.

“There was a tabernacle,” this refers to the two apartments, both the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

“The first” is referring to the first apartment the Holy Place, “wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread.” We had studied earlier that the Holy Place had three pieces of furniture, namely, the seven-branch Candlestick (or Menorah), the Table of Shewbread, and the Altar of Incense.

9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

“And after the second veil,” that is, after the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, “which is called the Holiest of all.” The Most Holy Place was the “Holiest of all” wherein was the Shekinah glory of God.

9:4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

When Paul says that the Most Holy Place “had the golden censer,” he would be referring to the Altar of Incense found in the Holy Place. On the last day of the religious year, the Day of Atonement, the Day of Judgment, the high priest had a golden censer with coals from the Altar of Incense and brought them within the second veil. While the high priest ministered in the Most Holy Place the golden censer remained in this second compartment. When the high priest was done ministering in the Most Holy Place, he brought the golden censer out with him.

Today, the censer still burns within the second veil. Jesus is still our great High Priest in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary ministering on our behalf.

If Paul’s main point is to refer to the Altar of Incense itself, then he would be revealing to us the main purpose of prayer. Since the Altar of Incense stood just before the second veil, we can see that prayer is designed to bring us into the presence of God. Just beyond the second veil was the very presence of God above the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant. The incense that arose from the Altar represents the merits of Christ. This is why we pray in the name of Jesus. Jesus is the veil, He is the way to the Father. It is through His merits that our prayers are acceptable with the Father.

Therefore, the phrase that the Most Holy Place “had” the golden censer tells us that the purpose of prayer is to help us draw closer and closer to God.

Within the second veil we also find the Ark of the Covenant, the golden pot of Manna, Aaron’s rod, and the Ten Commandments.

9:5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Above the Ark of the Covenant were two cherubims and the mercyseat.

9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

When the earthly sanctuary was anointed and the services began the priests would go into the Holy Place on a daily basis. They would offer incense in the Holy Place, they would trim the lamps, and on a weekly basis replace the showbread. If the congregation or the priest had sinned then a bullock was sacrificed and the blood would be sprinkled on the veil seven times while some would be applied to the horns of the Altar of Incense. See Leviticus chapter four.

9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

In verse six, Paul spoke about how the “priests” went in the Holy Place. But notice in verse seven that we are now talking about the “high priest” who alone would enter into the Most Holy Place once every year on the Day of Atonement. He would first bring the blood of a bullock as a sin offering for himself and his house. Then he would bring in the blood from the Lord’s goat to cleanse the sanctuary and the people.

9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

When Jesus died on the cross the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary was torn from top to bottom. This signified that the earthly sanctuary had come to an end and the Heavenly Sanctuary would now take its place. See Matthew 27:50-52.

Paul will in the following verses focus on the Heavenly Sanctuary. In the first seven verses, Paul described the earthly sanctuary which is a copy of the true. Therefore, we would understand that the Heavenly Sanctuary would also have two apartments, both a Holy Place and a Most Holy Place.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who leads us into all truth. And the truth being presented in this passage is that the “holiest of all,” the Heavenly Sanctuary, was not yet manifest while the “first tabernacle,” the earthly sanctuary, was still pointing forward to Christ as the Lamb of God. When Christ died the earthly sanctuary was no longer “standing.” Oh sure, it was still a physical structure, but there was no more use in offering those little lambs once Christ died as the Lamb of God. When Jesus ascended into heaven the Heavenly Sanctuary was now the one “standing” while the earthly had come to an end.

9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

The entire earthly sacrificial system was a figure of the true tabernacle and Jesus as our true High Priest. As Paul had discussed earlier, the Levitical system did not make anyone perfect. The outward performance of these “gifts and offerings” could not produce a clear “conscience.” This can only be accomplished by the true.

It is evident that many believers with a Hebrew background were still attending the services at the earthly temple. In fact, some of the early Hebrew believers thought that the believing Gentiles must keep the laws of Moses. At the Jerusalem Council it was determined that the Gentiles would not have to follow the laws of Moses, such as the keeping of the feast days. See Acts 15:1-21; Romans 14:1, 5.

Even in Old Testament times, God was not interested in thousands of sacrifices. Rather, He wanted them to fully surrender their hearts to Him that they might be converted.

“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psalm 51:16, 17

9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Tragically, the Levitical system was turned into a form of works. However, the main purpose was to teach them the plan of salvation where God both forgives and cleanses us from all sin. Throughout the centuries, men would bring their “meat and drink” offerings, or cereal and drink offerings. But since they did it as a form of works, it did not bring “reformation” to the life. They had instituted “divers washings” as religious rites, but they too could not reform the life. And all the “carnal ordinances” that pertained to the flesh did not transform the heart.

The “time of reformation” was the institution of the new covenant with better sacrifices, a Heavenly Sanctuary, and a superior High Priest.

9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

When Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, Jesus was already serving in the Heavenly Sanctuary as our High Priest. So when he says “of good things to come,” some of his listeners must be focusing on the earthly sanctuary instead of the heavenly. The purpose of the book of Hebrews is to help these believing Jews to see the “more perfect tabernacle” in the heavens, and our greater and far superior High Priest, Jesus Christ. Their attention needed to be drawn to the heavenly before the earthly would be destroyed in 70 AD.

It is true that Christ “tabernacled” in our flesh and lived a perfect life, which makes His life a “greater and more perfect tabernacle.” Such a perfect life cannot be lived by the strength of man, but by the aid of the Holy Spirit. But the flow of the argument in chapter nine is to take us from the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary, which is a far “greater and more perfect tabernacle.”

9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

The Heavenly Sanctuary is a far “greater and more perfect tabernacle” than the earthly. Jesus as our High Priest is far superior than the Levitical priests. And now we see that the “His own blood” is far superior than “the blood of goats and calves.”

It was necessary that “the blood of goats and calves” be offered throughout the year and from year to year, but Christ died once and for all “having obtained eternal redemption for us.” The blood of goats and calves could not take away sin; they were never designed to. However, these sacrifices did point forward to the time when God’s dear Son would, by His death, take away sin.

9:13, 14 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The “ashes of the heifer” were put in water and this was used as a sin offering. See Numbers 19. This combination of water and blood points to the sacrifice of Jesus. Notice in the following verses the combination of blood and water in reference to Christ’s sacrificial death:

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” 1 John 5:5, 6

“But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” John 19:33, 34

The “blood of bulls and of goats” was used also as sin offerings. These sacrifices for sin may have produced an outward appearance of obedience, but they did not change the heart. The sanctification “to the purifying of the flesh” is not the same as the transformation of the life.

If these sacrifices of animals could bring about an outward compliance, imagine what “the blood of Christ” can accomplish. What is the blood of Christ? It is the shed blood of a perfect life. It is the shed blood of the Son of man. Through, or by means of His eternal Spirit, we received His righteousness, which is not some simple outward compliance to God’s law. Oh no, the sanctifying influence of Christ’s eternal Spirit is God’s law written in the heart. We now have a life “without spot to God.” It is a life whereby you have a clear conscience from dead works. You are now living the new life, not by works, but by Christ living in you to “serve the living God.”

9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Because of His death, His perfect life, and the cleansing power of Christ’s blood, He is the “Mediator of the new testament” or a new covenant. The forgiveness of sins would require the “death” of God’s dear

Son. In Him there is “redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament.” Those who lived before Christ, by faith, offered up their animal sacrifices pointing to the Messiah to come. All those confessed sins prior to the death of Christ are covered by His sacrifice. After all, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. And all who have received Him “might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

9:16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Our inheritance is made possible by the death of Christ. Testament in this passage has reference to a “will.” Before the “will” or “testament” can be enforced, the “testator” must first die. For example, before you can receive your inheritance from your parents, they would need to first pass away. As long as they are alive, the “will” cannot be enforced. Therefore, for us to receive that “eternal inheritance” it was necessary for Jesus to die in our place.

Consider this very important point: The new covenant is God writing His law, the Ten Commandments, upon our hearts and mind. Now some teach that Sunday is the Lord’s day. However, this is not possible. For there to be a change in the law it would have to happen before Jesus died. Everyone knows that you cannot change a “will” or a “testament” after the person has died. None of the commandments were changed during the time of Christ’s ministry. Therefore, His death solidified and enforced the Ten Commandments as He had written them with His own finger. To say the we keep Sunday in honor of Christ’s resurrection is neither historically true, nor is it in line with the rules of a “will” or “testament.”

9:17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Again, the “will” or “testament” cannot go into effect unless the “testator” has died. And no changes can be made to the testament after the testator has died.

9:18, 19 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept 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,

“The first testament” which was given at Sinai was dedicated with blood on the Day of Atonement. See Leviticus 16. Before the earthly sanctuary began, its services were anointed by oil. See Leviticus 8. As Paul says, the first covenant was ratified by “the blood of calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop....” See Exodus 24:5-8.

9:20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

Compare this with Jesus words at the Last Supper, saying, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matthew 26:28

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 11:24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 11:25 After the same

manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

Everything was consecrated and dedicated in the earthly sanctuary. All of it pointed to Christ's death, resurrection, and intercessory work.

9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Not all the offerings were blood offerings in the sanctuary. See Leviticus 5:11-13; Numbers 19; 31:23, 24. Yet, all those blood offerings pointed to the true sacrifice in the death of Jesus, the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29

9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

We had learned in verses 18, 19 that the earthly sanctuary needed to be dedicated and anointed. Now we learn that the earthly sanctuary also needed to be cleansed. Once the sanctuary services began, penitent sinners brought their sacrifices and made their confessions. These confessed sins were then transferred into the sanctuary via the blood of the sacrifice. It then became necessary on the last day of the religious year to cleanse the sanctuary from all those confessed sins. This was done with the sacrifice of the Lord's goat on the Day of Atonement.

But as in the earthly so in the heavenly. But we might ask, "Why would the Heavenly Sanctuary need cleansing?" Not only did the rebellion against God's government begin in heaven, but all our confessed sins arise to the Heavenly Sanctuary.

The work of Jesus, our great High Priest in the Most Holy Place, is performing the work of cleansing the Heavenly Sanctuary from all our confessed sins with the corresponding work of cleansing us from all sin.

While it is true that the Heavenly Sanctuary is to be cleansed from all our confessed sins, the focus of Paul's argument seems to be on the need for a "better sacrifice." If the "blood of calves and goats" were used to cleanse the earthly, imagine how much more powerful is the blood of Christ in cleansing the heavenly. While the "blood of calves and goats" brought about an outward reform, the "better sacrifice" of Christ's blood cleanses us from all sin from within.

9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Christ our great High Priest has entered into the Heavenly Sanctuary "to appear in the presence of God" face-to-face. The earthly high priest did not see God face-to-face, nor could he do so and live. But our great High Priest is in the very presence of the Father "for us."

The word “appear” has the connotation that He has entered but once. The earthly high priest entered the earthly Most Holy Place once a year, but he did so year after year. You might say, “he went in and out.” But our heavenly High Priest has now entered the Most Holy Place in heaven and will remain there in the presence of the Father until His work is done. Then He shall return with all His angels to receive His own.

9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

Christ offered Himself once for sin. He entered the Holy Place once when He ascended. He has entered into the Most Holy Place once and for all. When He leaves the Most Holy Place, He will take off His priestly garments and put on His kingly garments. Praise God!

But the earthly high priest has entered the Holy Place and Most Holy Place many times only to have to enter once again.

9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

If Jesus’ ministry was like the Levitical, then He would have needed to become incarnate in human flesh many times, and would have to die many times. So you see, the priestly ministry of Jesus is far superior to that of the Levitical priesthood. And His once and for all sacrifice is able “to put away sin.”

9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

It is true that the wages of sin is death, and since all men have sinned, all have died. Christ who never sinned became sin for us and bore our sins in His own body. Like all who have put on human flesh, He died once. But He shall return. After His work in the Most Holy Place, which is the work of judgment, He shall return and reward every man according to his deeds.

The fact that men die is not the end. All must face the judgment. While the judgment will be in favor of the saints, they too will be judged. And all judgment is given to the Son. The One who died for our sins and sacrificed Himself is our holy, harmless, and loving Savior.

9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

In His first advent, Christ took upon Himself our sins. He now intercedes for us and works to cleanse us from all sin. But when He returns, He does so “without sin unto salvation.”

Hebrews Chapter Ten

10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

The ceremonial law which was a “shadow” of the heavenly sanctuary and the work of Christ, could not make any man “perfect.” The fact that men continued to offer the blood of lambs, bullocks, and goats “year by year” showed that these sacrifices did not make man perfect.

This of course implies that the offering of God’s dear Son as our Substitute can take away sin and can make a man perfect in Christ.

10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

If the earthly sacrifices could make men perfect then they would have ceased. There would be no more reason to offer a sacrifice for sin if men had no more “conscience of sin.”

Of course, men could have had a clear conscience had they complied with the everlasting covenant.

10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Every year on the Day of Atonement, men needed to make sure that they had confessed every sin. They were ever reminded that they continued to sin and were in need of a Savior.

10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The blood of bulls and of goats was not designed to take away sin. The blood of these sacrifices pointed forward to the Messiah whose blood could take away sin. By faith ancient Israel could have experienced the power available to overcome sin. But tragically they focused on the shadow and not the true. They came to see the blood sacrifices of animals as some sort of payment of sin. But you cannot pay to have your sins taken away, even with a thousand sacrifices.

10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

When Christ was born of a woman, He took upon Himself our flesh and blood. This is clearly established by Paul in chapter two. This body would become the sacrifice for the sins of men. In this body, Christ was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He bore our sins in His own human body. He drank the bitter cup of our iniquity.

He did not take on the body of a beast like a bull or a goat, for man is not a bull or a goat. The Son of God took on the form of man to show that man was created in the image of God. Furthermore, our sins are against God. Sin is the transgression of the God’s law, therefore only Someone equal to that Divine law could pay the price for transgressing it.

In this body, Jesus lived a perfect life in accordance with God's law to demonstrate the life that God had intended for the human race. But men could not reveal the image of God while they kept sinning. Therefore, Christ would come and paid the penalty for our sins and also show us the way in having the image of God restored in man.

So Christ did not come to offer up bulls and goats, but to offer Himself. In so doing, He showed the Divine origin of the law and the high calling of men being created in the image of God.

10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Men may have felt that God was pleased with all these animal sacrifices, but He was not.

10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

Christ came to show men how to live a life in accordance with God's will. What is God's will? "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea Thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8

Men kept bringing offerings and sacrifices because they kept breaking God's law. Christ came in our flesh and blood to show that man can keep God's law through the power of the Holy Spirit. But tragically, men had substituted obedience for sacrifice.

10:8, 9 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

The "first" was the ceremonial law of burnt offerings and sin offerings pointing to the Messiah to come. When Christ became the Lamb of God, the ceremonial law came to an end. But Jesus did something more, He "established the second." He showed by His own sinless life that man can keep God's law. Men did not need to substitute obedience for sacrifice. He "established the second" by doing God's will as expressed in those ten moral precepts.

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

Paul says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3. God's will is that we are sanctified or made holy. What is holiness? It is perfect obedience to the perfect will of God as expressed in His ten perfect moral precepts. This sanctification process begins with the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He lived the sanctified life for us. He also offered His sanctified life as the substitute for our sins. In Him we are justified and sanctified.

Christ did not need to die again for our sanctification. His perfect and sinless life accomplished both our justification and our sanctification. Paul wrote that Jesus Christ was "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

While Christ accomplished our justification and sanctification with His one life and one sacrifice, the Levitical priests continued to offer “the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

But Jesus in His life of thirty-three years had the law perfectly written upon His heart that He might be the perfect sacrifice for our sins and our perfect example of living a life in accordance with God’s perfect will. Jesus is not “standing” doing the same thing over and over and over again. Rather, He did all this once and has “sat down on the right hand of God,” and ministers His perfect sacrifice on our behalf.

10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Christ need not become a man again and die again. It is finished. He is victor. It is true that the great controversy still needs to play out until the rebellion of Satan comes to full maturity, but the outcome is sure, “His enemies” will “be made His footstool.”

10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

By His one sacrifice for sin and His perfect life in our sinful flesh, He has “perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” The devil cannot change what Christ has accomplished. It is possible for man to live a life in perfect accordance with God’s law. We are able to be “perfected” in Christ Jesus. We are sanctified in Him and are being sanctified. New believers are coming to Christ each and every day from all around the world. Lives are being changed because of that one perfect life, the life of God’s dear Son.

10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

Not only does Christ’s perfect life point to the truth of our sanctification in Him, but the Holy Spirit testifies that these things are so.

10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

What does Christ’s perfect life as our justification and sanctification mean to us? It means that God’s perfect law can be written in our hearts and mind. This is how the image of God is restored in man.

10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Those who covenant with God to keep His law by the power of the Holy Spirit will not only be forgiven but changed. God’s covenant is twofold. We are to obey His commands and He will forgive our sin and remember them no more.

10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

When we experience the cleansing power of Christ’s sacrifice for sin, we no longer need to be the slaves to sin. We have the forgiveness of sin through Christ’s atoning sacrifice once and for all. We are sanctified

by receiving the life of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. There is now no more need to make offerings for sin because you need no longer sin.

10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

The high priest in the earthly sanctuary entered the “holiest” with fear as he brought the blood of the goat, but we are to enter the “holiest” in heaven with confidence by the “blood of Jesus.” Where does this confidence come from? We have experienced freedom from guilt in the courtyard. We have experienced freedom from the power of sin in the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Our confidence is not due to some mere intellectualism, but from a living connection with Christ.

10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

This new life was consecrated for us by the sinless life of Jesus. Day by day, and choice by choice, Jesus lived a perfect life in our sinful flesh. Why did He do this? So that we might live a life in perfect accordance with God’s will in this present world. See Romans 8:3, 4; Titus 2:11-14

The veil, which was the way into the “holiest,” represents the “flesh” our humanity of Christ. If Christ had not come in our flesh, there would be no gospel. If He had not lived a sinless life in this flesh, there would be no gospel. Because He lived a consecrated life in this flesh, we can live that new life through the work of the Holy Spirit.

This “new way” is the “living way.” It does matter how you live in this life. As John wrote, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:12. The “living way” is the life of Christ. If you have the Son you have this life. But if you do not have the Son, then you do not have this life. What kind of life is this? “(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)” 1 John 1:2. The life that Jesus lived is what eternal life is all about. Therefore, if we have the Son we have life, that eternal life which is with the Father. This is the life that Jesus manifested in our flesh and blood. This is the “new way” that has been consecrated for us.

10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;

Jesus is the true High Priest of the Heavenly Sanctuary, as such, He is the High Priest of the Church and there is none other. There is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Therefore, the Catholic teaching that the pope and its priests are mediators to God is false.

10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Because of Jesus, the God-man, the perfect Sacrifice for sin, the perfect Intercessor for man, “let us draw near” unto God.

How do we draw near? We are to draw near with a “true heart,” an honest heart. We are to draw near with “full assurance of faith,” where there is no doubting. We are to draw near with our “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” as a people fully dedicated to God. We are to draw near with “our bodies washed with pure water,” that we are prepared to serve each and every day in God’s vineyard.

10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

God has always been “faithful” in all that He has “promised.” He delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, He fed them with manna, He made water come out of rocks, He parted the Red Sea and the Jordan River, He has given to the human family His only Son, indeed God has kept every promise.

Our part is to “hold fast the profession of our faith,” and our hope in Him without wavering. Hope is a major theme in the book of Hebrews. Consider the following texts:

“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Hebrews 3:6

“And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:” Hebrews 6:11

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;” Hebrews 6:18, 19

“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.” Hebrews 7:19

10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

We are not only to be kind to one another, but we are to encourage one another to walk in the path of Jesus. We are not to be simply interested in our own salvation, but also interested in the eternal destiny of others.

The “good works” we are to perform are more than being nice works, they are to be beautiful. The Greek word for “good” in this verse has to do with something beautiful, namely, a beautiful and noble act. Consider the following passages where this word is used elsewhere:

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16. In other words, may your beautiful Christlike works always bring glory to God.

“When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.” Matthew 26:10. What Mary did was more than nice, it was beautiful.

10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

With the threat of the Roman armies coming to Jerusalem, this admonition meant much to the believers residing in or near the city. Even prior to this, the early church often found it difficult to meet in large gatherings due to the persecution from pagans and Jews.

Will do they remember the words of Jesus concerning the destruction of the Jerusalem and the temple. See Matthew 24. "The day" was "approaching." In a few years the city and the temple would be destroyed with not one stone left upon another. In such times, it was important to "exhort one another." It was important to "assemble... together" and share their common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

Like Peter, there have been men who have denied the Lord, but have been brought back to the fold. But if a man continues to reject the truth and the work of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, then there is nothing more than God can do. If in the end, he rejects the "sacrifice for sins" then he will die in his sins.

10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

While individuals are not to be terrified with hellfire sermons, we are nonetheless not to minimize the seriousness of the judgment. A man who has tasted of the Lord and then rejects all that he learned must consider the seriousness of his actions. Not only will he be lost if he refuses to repent of his backsliding, but his influence on others is detrimental. Some will scoff at spiritual things due to his apostasy, and others will simply not be reached because he has left his position as a witness for Christ.

10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Those who rebelled against the laws of Moses during Old Testament time were prosecuted for their offense. To maintain justice, the charges against the accused must be confirmed by "two or three witnesses." If justice was so guarded under the Mosaic law, will it not also be carefully guarded when God judges the hearts of all men?

10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

In this verse we have a man that "was sanctified" but has now "trodden under foot the Son of God." He has "counted the blood of the covenant" as "an unholy thing." If men were punished for breaking the laws of Moses, then what happens to those who despise the grace offered to all men? The answer is that they will experience a "sorer punishment." When men broke the laws of Moses they experienced the death that all men face. But when men reject salvation, they face the second death where there is no hope of a resurrection. They do not simply forfeit life, they forfeit eternal life.

10:30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

He who alone can read the human heart must be Judge of all. His judgment is just. He will “recompense” all men according to their deeds.

10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

God is love, and because He is love He can by no means clear the guilty. See Exodus 34:7. Men may feel that they have gotten away with evil in this life, but they will face the judgment of Him who sees all things.

10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

The book of Acts records many of the “afflictions” that the early believers had to face. With the upcoming threat of Rome destroying Jerusalem, Paul admonishes these early believers to remember how the Lord delivered them at the beginning of the work. Many of them no doubt lost employment because of their open faith in Jesus. Many were disowned by family and friends. Some had loved ones who were persecuted and put to death. But Paul now encourages them to “endure” the “great fight of afflictions.”

10:33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

Early believers endured open slander and some open afflictions. There were some who escaped such affliction but were close companions of those who endured mistreatment.

10:34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Paul himself had been in “bonds” or in prison; he suffered greatly for his steadfast faith in Christ. Others had “the spoils” of their household goods taken from them. However, the “enduring substance” of eternal life and the Earth made new is far better than anything here on Earth.

10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

It is not easy to be subjected to loss of goods and employment, and to face imprisonment for one’s faith in Christ. However, there is “great recompense of reward” awaiting all who are faithful unto the end. Do not become discouraged, do not “cast... away... your confidence” in Christ Jesus. He has prepared for each trying circumstance. Maintain your faith and hope in all that He has promised.

10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

We all have need of endurance to make sure that we cross the finish line. We are almost home, do not give up now. Continue to submit your will to the “will of God” and you will “receive the promise.”

10:37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Many had hoped that Jesus would have already come the second time. Many felt that He would return soon. Paul was clear that the “man of sin” must first appear before the Second Coming. See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8. The Lord “will not tarry.” When everything has come to full fruition, He will come.

10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

The phrase, “the just shall live by faith,” can be found in Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:16, 17. We are not only to be forgiven by faith, we are to live by faith. The faith that we had when God had forgiven us of all our sins, is to be the same faith that we now live by. It is this living faith that transforms the character into the image of Jesus Christ.

Do not “draw back” now when the Romans are at the door. This is the time to proclaim Christ’s prophecy concerning Jerusalem and the temple. Do not allow the fear of impending doom silence your witness.

This is true for us today. When the Sunday laws loom on the horizon, it is not the time to remain silent or to “draw back,” rather we are to share with others the prophetic word. When the Sunday laws are passed we are to proclaim the Sabbath more fully.

10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

It is our firm belief in God’s saving grace that will lead us to proclaim the truth in a time of trouble. The more confidence we have in Him, the more we will proclaim the truth to a world ready to perish.

Hebrews Chapter Eleven

11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

True faith is not blind faith, it is the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” What are the “things hoped for”? This would be eternal life and the inheritance of the saints.

What are some “substances”? If we indeed believe in the Word of God, there is the substance of God’s Word. Contain therein is the history of God’s people and the life and teachings of Christ. God’s Word speaks of creation. We see in the beauties of creation a wonderful Designer. We see in the prophecies One who knows the end from the beginning. We see in the history of ancient Israel a God that can part

the Red Sea, rain manna from heaven, and perform many other wonderful acts of Divine power. We see in Jesus the loving character of the Father. We see in the Ten Commandments the transcript of God's moral character. We see in God's Word wisdom, direction, and power. We have in our own life been led of the Spirit and have experienced the sanctifying influence of Christ's life. We have much substance to substantiate our faith in God. We have much to base our faith in all that He has promised.

11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

"For by it," by faith, the elders or the ancient, the men of old, "obtained a good report." These men of old obtained a good report because their faith led to a life of faith. Their lives demonstrated that they had a living faith.

11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

By faith we believe in Creation. We were not there when God created the world, yet we believe that God called forth the things that we see from nothing. God has created everything, namely, space, time, the material world, the creatures that roam the earth, and man, whom He created in His own image.

11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Abel believed in the Messiah to come. He believed that he needed a Savior. Therefore, he offered exactly what God had prescribed. God acceptable Abel's sacrifice of blood; his sacrifice stands even today as a witness as one who lived by faith. Cain on the other hand, made an offering that resembled that of salvation by works. His offering was without blood and was not accepted.

11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam and was translated only a few years after Adam had died. Imagine the impact of Adam's death on the human family. But man had hope when God translate Enoch and took him to heaven. In these two lives we find that the wages of sin is death, yet in Enoch we find the promise of eternal life.

11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Without faith in God it would be impossible to please Him. After all, without faith in God a man would not search after God or the things of God. The first step of faith is to believe that God indeed exists. But beyond that, we must also believe that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It is one thing to believe in God's existence, it is another thing to believe that He is all-loving, all-wise, and all-powerful.

We need to "diligently seek Him," not because He is hiding, but because we desire to know Him. Because He has given us life and the promise of eternal life through His Son, we desire to be like Him.

11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Noah showed that he had a living faith in God which was demonstrated by the building of the ark. He believed in God and he believed what God had said. He was moved by God's Word into action and prepared an ark for himself and his family. It was this living faith that acted upon God's Word that he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." The unbelieving world scoffed at the warning of the Flood and they were destroyed.

11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

God told Abraham to leave the land of Ur to a place that he would show him. Before Abraham knew where he would eventually settle, by faith he obeyed God's Word, "not knowing whither he went."

11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, but it never seemed like home. He never went back to his home in Haran or Ur, but remained in Canaan. It was a "strange country" to him, and it made him hunger all the more so for the heavenly Canaan. God allowed Abraham to go through this experience to wean him from the things of this world.

11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham understood that this old world is not the inheritance of the saints, but an Earth made new.

11:11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Sarah was ninety years old when she gave birth to Isaac. She was well pasted the age of giving birth to a son, but she believed that God was able. Not only did she believe that God is able, but because God had promised. So faith is to believe that God is able to perform all that He has promised.

11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Like Sarah, Abraham was beyond the years to produce a son. At times they both lacked faith, but in the end they grasped what God had promised and believed.

11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

These all, from Enoch to Abraham, knew that the promise was a long ways off, nonetheless they believed. Nay more, they were persuaded that these things are so, and embraced the promises of God and rejoiced in the world to come. Therefore, they saw themselves as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

If they embraced God’s promises from afar, should we not as those who live in these last days, embrace the promises of God even more?

11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

By declaring that they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” they did not live for this world but for the world to come. They were indeed preparing for eternity.

11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Had Abraham kept thinking about the good life in Haran, he might have been tempted to return. But he did not think about a country that God had instructed him to leave.

11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

What Abraham did think about was that “better country, that is an heavenly.” God has “prepared for them a city” who are preparing to live in that heavenly city. But if a man lives his life to gain the world, he has lost sight of the world to come.

11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.

God knows the end from the beginning, and therefore knew that Abraham would obey His voice in offering up his only son. God allowed Abraham to go through this experience that his faith may come to maturity. It would also serve as an illustration of God giving up His only begotten. As Isaac’s birth was a miracle, so was the birth of Jesus.

Even though Isaac was not the only son of Abraham, he was nonetheless the promised son who alone could receive the promises and the covenants.

11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

It was in Genesis 21:12 that God had said, “That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham believed that Isaac truly was the son of promise and that God would raise him from the dead to fulfill His will, that through Isaac, Abraham would become the father of a great nation.

11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

After Isaac recognized that it was God's will that Jacob should have the blessing, he was at peace.

11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph, namely, Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob put his right hand upon Ephraim, the younger son, as according to God's will. See Genesis 48:17-19

Jacob did not worship his staff, but he worshiped God while leaning on his staff.

11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Joseph had faith in God's promise that his people would return to Palestine. Therefore, he requested that his bones be taken and buried in the Promised Land. See Genesis 50:24, 25; Exodus 13:19

11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, saw that Moses was a healthy baby and took steps against the king's commandment to save him.

11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Moses chose to be identified with God's covenant people rather than "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Moses chose to suffer the affliction of a people in possession of the covenants and the promises, rather than to enjoy the fleeting wealth of Egypt.

11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

It is better to believe in the coming Messiah than to have all the riches of Egypt. It is better to look forward to the reward of the righteous than to be so short-sighted and blinded by worldly wealth. Moses saw in the covenants and promises a far greater weight of glory.

11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king, but still believing that God would deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. Moses waited upon God and learned the lessons of humility..

11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Though his life was threatened by Pharaoh, by faith Moses “sprinkled” blood on the doorpost, signifying his faith that the destroying angel would pass over his house and those of the Hebrews in sparing the firstborn.

11:29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

By faith the nation of Israel passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. They had no weapons while Pharaoh had his chariots, but it mattered not, the God of heaven and earth would deliver His people. See Exodus 14.

11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Joshua placed more faith in God’s plan to take Jericho than in all his military experience. No army would follow through with such a plan to march around a city seven times, unless they had faith in God’s Word.

Have we abandoned God’s blueprint for our own plans to evangelize the world? Should we not exhibit the same faith as those who circled Jericho?

11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Though she was a heathen and a harlot, Rahab exhibited faith in the God of Israel and she was spared.

11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Paul could have written volumes of the faithful through the ages, but he has given us enough examples to show that genuine faith is demonstrated by faithfulness to God’s Word.

11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

The faithful through the ages “subdued kingdoms” like Joshua and David. The faithful “wrought righteousness” like Enoch, Samuel, and Elijah. The faithful “obtained promises” like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The faithful “stopped the mouths of lions” like David and Daniel.

11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

The faithful “quenched the violence of fire” like the three Hebrew worthies. The faithful “escaped the edge of the sword” like the two spies at Jericho, and David before Saul. The faithful “out of weakness were made strong” like kings Hezekiah and Jehoshaphat. The faithful “waxed valiant in fight” like Samson and Joshua. The faithful “turned flight the armies of the aliens” like Joshua, Deborah and Barak, and Gideon.

11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Faithful women like the Shunammite woman and the widow of Sarepta “received their dead raised to life again.” Others were tortured like Jeremiah, and some were martyred. But they would not compromise their faith, as such, they will “obtain a better resurrection.”

11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Men like Joseph were imprisoned. Paul the author of this book was in bonds. Yet they maintained their faith in God and will be recipients of the inheritance of the saints.

11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Stephen was stoned as well as Naboth of Jezreel. Isaiah was “sawn asunder.” Others slain by the sword. Men like Elijah and David “wandered” and were hunted.

11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

This wicked world which was once destroyed by a flood, was not worthy of these men and women of faith. The world did not recognize that these saints were the salt of the earth, keeping it preserved from even more corruption.

11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

All these saints that have gone before us are resting in the grave awaiting the resurrection. They have already fought the good fight of faith. It is now up to the last generation to cross the finish line. Until that last generation ushers in the Second Coming, the saints of old remain sleeping.

11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

But God has a wonderful plan. We all get to go to heaven together. When that last generation does cross the finish line and the work is done, we all get to go home to heaven for one thousand years. Until that time, the saints of old shall not be made perfect.

But that glorious day is coming when all the saints from every age shall come forth from the graves and be changed in a twinkling of an eye. Then they shall be winged to heaven and enter into that celestial home. Amen.

Hebrews Chapter Twelve

12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

As a conclusion to chapter eleven, the faith chapter, there is “so great a cloud of witnesses” of men and women who lived by faith that we should be encouraged to finish the race. These saints of old may have stumbled, but they finished strong. Therefore, let us put aside anything that would lessen our love for God or the service due to Him.

While our specific struggles with sin may vary, we are nonetheless to lay them aside that they may not distract us from the spiritual race set before us. And because this race is not a sprint but a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ, we must receive patience or perseverance to face life’s trials and temptations.

The race is about spiritual growth. It is about character. At the end of your life, did you show that you followed Jesus or not?

12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Where does the patience and endurance come from? It comes from “looking unto the author and finisher of our faith.” Christ is the “author,” He is the center of the plan of salvation. By His perfect sacrifice we are forgiven of our sins. By His perfect life the image of God is restored in man.

Jesus is the “finisher of our faith.” We are to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18. We are to “grow up into Him in all things.” Ephesians 4:15. Christ is to be all in all.

If there were but one repentant sinner, Christ would have “endured the cross.” He cared not for Himself, therefore He “despised the shame.” He was willing to disregard all abuse towards Himself for the joy of seeing others in heaven. This same Jesus who was willing to pay any price to save man is “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” This is His rightful place.

12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Consider Jesus who endured more insult and abuse than any man. The nation He came to save cried out, “Crucify Him!” Satan tried to make the life of Jesus one of constant opposition. Yet Jesus never gave up and never gave in. He remained faithful to His Father that had sent Him. Because we see Jesus triumphing over every trial and temptation, we too must gather strength from His example. If we could but see that Jesus shared in our sufferings, how much easier it would be to face life’s trials.

12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

You have battles yet to fight. You will need to be faithful unto death. You must strive against your fallen nature; this is the real enemy in the conflict. The devil will tempt you, but if your heart is surrendered to Christ you shall be victorious.

12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

Often Christians are taken back by trials and difficulties. Many assume that such things should not be happening to them. They may even resent that God has allowed such trials. But as a father disciplines his son that he might grow up into a responsible adult, so too God allows challenges to come our way that we may learn patience, understanding, faith, forgiveness, and love.

We are not to faint under trials but become stronger through them. We are not to become bitter but better. Therefore, do not despise chastening, but embrace it. Grow from it. Chastening is God’s way of training and instructing us. It is part of our upbringing in Christ.

12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

God does not order scourging, but He chastens us because He loves us. God will administer that which is necessary for us to mature as sons of God.

12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

People hesitate from chastening or disciplining someone else's child. So when God chastens you it is because you are His sons or daughters. There is a responsibility that comes with being a parent. We are to train our children aright. Our children are not born with knowledge; we have to teach them. They are not born with certain skills; we need to train them. If earthly parents sense their responsibility as parents, how much the more so does God?

12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

If you fail as parents to train your children to do good, they will likely do wrong. It is not fair to the child to grow up without discipline. To receive no discipline is like having no parents.

12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

The "fathers of our flesh" are our earthly parents. The "Father of spirits" is God the Father from whom we owe our existence. If we reverence our earthly parents how much the more so should we "be in subjection" to our heavenly Father?

12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

During the early years of childhood and youth our earthly parents chastened us. They disciplined us according to "their own pleasure" or limited knowledge. But our heavenly Father will never error in our training. There would be no selfish motives. His chastising is always for our eternal good. And what is best for us? The most important thing is to become a partaker of His holiness.

12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Present conflicts seldom ever seem joyous, rather they seem "grievous." But he who has matured in Christ will appreciate the hard lessons of life. He now sees that the chastisement of those earlier years of life has in part made him the man he is today. A sure sign of maturity is when a young man comes to this realization.

There is contained in this verse the wonderful promise that a parent's diligence in training a child will not be in vain.

The goal of discipline is "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Too often parents make their children disciples of Uncle Sam instead of disciples of Jesus Christ. Proper training prepares our children for godly service in this life and in the life to come.

12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Hands that hang down and feeble knees are signs of discouragement and disappointment. Rather than being downcast, lift up your hands in praise that God is your heavenly Parent that will train you and discipline you for a great work. Do not speak words of doubt, but of faith. Do not think failure, but victory.

12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Stay on the straight path. Do not “turn out of the way” to avoid discipline. If you do, those “feeble knees” will become dislocated. Then it will really be hard to walk even as He walked. Instead of bringing injury to yourself by going down the wrong path, choose to be healed and strengthened by going down the straight path.

12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Our peace with all men should not lead us to unholiness, this is not how you make peace with men—this would be a false peace. Compromising the truth for peace is a false peace.

True peace is to be made holy as God is holy—it is holiness or sanctification—it is by ministering unto others—taking a real interest in their souls salvation. Without which no man shall see the Lord.

The opposite of holiness is found in verse 16.

“no man shall SEE the Lord.” You could take that physically, but we do not see God physically right now. A person must have a sanctified mind to see the Lord aright—therefore only he who is being made holy can see God as He is.

Now turning to the believer’s relationship with other people, Paul encourages them to “follow peace with all men.” As Paul wrote in the book of Romans, saying, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Romans 12:18

Also pursue “holiness.” Seek that inward beauty of Christlikeness. Be men of moral fiber, “without which no man shall see the Lord.”

12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

“Looking diligently” is to strive to enter into the straight gate. Nobody is just going to drift into heaven. “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22

Strive that you do not “fail of the grace of God.” Do not “fail,” do not start on a downward trend in life. It may begin with “any root of bitterness.” You hold something against a brother and you nurture it by negative expressions towards that person. It may not sound like open rebellion, but the bitterness, though hidden, is detected. That dark spot in the character grows darker and contaminates others to be critical. And soon there is variance between brethren.

In relation to verse 14 and the call to holiness, any and all “bitterness” must be rooted out. As long as those seeds lie beneath the surface there is the potential that they will bear fruit that defiles. So “roots of bitterness” must be rooted out. When that bitterness begins to spring up, root it out. Do not procrastinate with sin brethren.

12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Will we now throw away our inheritance in the Lord for sin, like Esau sold his birthright for bread?

Immorality and profanity destroy our desire for spiritual things. As Esau was more concerned with the earthly than the heavenly, those who are practicing fornicators and blasphemers make light of the spiritual.

12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Esau cried that he lost the blessing, but afterwards he wanted to murder his brother. He was sorrow for the consequences. Many are that way today, they want to avoid the penalty of sin, but they do not want to be changed.

God chose Jacob because he placed the spiritual above the earthly, while Esau placed the earthly above the spiritual. As a result, God chose Jacob to receive the blessing. Esau cried that he lost the birthright, but he did not truly repent of his worldly ways. See Genesis 27:34-38

12:18, 19 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

The Hebrew people had lost sight of the awesome power of God while they were slaves in Egypt, but by a mighty hand He delivered them from their captor. More than this, upon Mount Sinai there were lightning and thunders, the voice of God shook the earth, the mountains trembled, and darkness covered the land. The people were afraid and with one voice the people “entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.”

Why were they afraid? It was the voice of the Creator, the Lawgiver, and the Judge. It is sin that makes us tremble before our Maker.

12:20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

They were afraid they would die because they were told, “And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.”

12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

So terrible was the sight that they had never seen anything like it. Even Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.”

This must have been such an awesome display. After all, this is the same people who just witnessed the parting of the Red Sea. How could anything be more spectacular than that? The latter was for their deliverance, whereby they saw the mercy of their Lawgiver and Deliverer. Upon the Mount they experienced the awful justice of the Lawgiver.

12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Now Paul turns his reader to a new scene. But you, followers of Christ, have now come to Mount Zion. We are no longer at the base of Mount Sinai. By faith you have come to Mount Zion in the heavenly New Jerusalem, where there is “an innumerable company of angels.”

12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

If ye be Christ’s, then you are part of the general assembly and church of those who have been born-again. As such, your names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. And as ancient Israel stood before the Lawgiver at Mount Sinai, so shall ye stand before the Judge of all the earth.

The phrase, “the spirits of just men,” is not perfected spirits but the “spirits of just men made perfect.”

“The spirits of just men made perfect” are men who have been sanctified by the presence of Christ. Instead of being fearful as the men of ancient Israel, they have confidence because Jesus is their Mediator.

12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

You have come to Mount Zion through Jesus your Mediator of the new covenant. “New” in that it is fresh, Jesus just recently died for our sins.

It is not “new” as if this was a new idea. Oh no, Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but He was recently slain.

Through Him you have the forgiveness of sins. You have been sprinkling with the blood of Jesus and stand justified in His sight. As such, the blood of Jesus “speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

Innocent Abel was murdered by his brother Cain, and his blood cries out for justice. But the blood of Abel likely being spoken of here is the blood offering he made according to God’s command. It is the blood of Jesus that is for greater than the blood offering that Abel had offered. Yet, the sacrifice of Abel pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus.

The blood of Jesus atones for our sins and ratifies the new covenant.

12:25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Therefore, do not refuse to listen to God when He speaks, after all, He sent His only Son into the world to pay the penalty for our sins. Do not repeat the history of ancient Israel who “refused Him that spake” on the Mount. Their refusal to hear is directly related to their history of disobedience. So if ancient Israel did not escape by refusing to hear God from Mount Sinai, how shall we escape if we refuse to listen to God from His throne in heaven?

12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

When God spoke from Mount Sinai, His voice “shook the earth.” When God speaks again in these last days, His voice will “shake not the earth only, but also heaven.”

12:27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Those things that are not founded upon God’s Word will be shaken and destroyed by the voice of God. But the “spirits of just men made perfect” shall remain. God’s people are to settle into the truth of God’s Word so as not to be moved. That same Word must find its way to the heart.

In the context of Paul’s argument in Hebrews, the old sacrificial has been shaken out of the way, to make way for the true tabernacle, even the heavenly. The heavenly remains and cannot be shaken out.

Yet, the devil will try to misdirected the church in the centuries that followed the early church, to turn to the false priesthood of the Catholic church. See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Daniel 8:11-14

As the present time there is a great shaking going on in the churches. Men are either being shaken out or settled into the truth. The time of trouble that is coming will clearly separate those who have fortified the mind with truth from those who have not.

12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

As citizens of God's heavenly kingdom, let us give thanks and praise to God for His goodness and mercy. Let us serve Him with a heart full of joy and "godly fear." Those who reverence God the most are those who know Him the best.

12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

God demonstrated on Mount Sinai that He was a consuming fire. Let us receive Him as a consuming fire to cleanse us from all sin.

Hebrews Chapter Thirteen

13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

Paul has presented to the people of God the work of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary. He has directed their attention from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly. He has made his case that Jesus is far more superior than the angels, than Moses, and the Levitical priests. The Heavenly Sanctuary is far superior than the earthly as Christ blood is to the blood of bulls and goats.

Paul has encouraged the brethren to hold fast, nay more, that they should enter into the holiest, the Heavenly Sanctuary, with boldness. He has encouraged them to have faith as the men of old and not to draw back. He will now make a final appeal for them to enter into that everlasting covenant with Jesus.

"Let brotherly love continue." Keep on loving one another. With the soon destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, you must be there for one another. You will be scattered among the nations, therefore let not one be lost due to a lack of fellowship, support, and love.

13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Do not get so absorbed in your own little world and forget your brother who may have nowhere to lay his head. By helping strangers some have even "entertained angels unawares." See Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3; Judges 6:11-20.

13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Remember the golden rule to do unto others as you would want them to do unto you. See Matthew 7:12

Visit those in prison as if you were in prison. Comfort those suffering from adversity as if you were the one suffering. Be there for others as you would want them to be there for you.

13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Without question God will judge those who persist in the acts of adultery. But Paul goes even further. Husbands and wives should have a pure intimacy between them. The bed is not to be lowered to base animal passions, nor are we to withhold our love from our spouse. Make every aspect of the married life honorable.

13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

“Let your conversation” or your life “be without covetousness.” Do not live a self-centered life; take an interest in the eternal destiny of others.

“Be content with such things as ye have,” God has not promised you everything that you want, but He will provide everything that you need. For God has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” See Genesis 28:15; Isaiah 41:17; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Joshua 1:5

13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

This quotation is taken from Psalm 118:6. “The Lord is my helper” means that the Lord is “for me.” Therefore, I can be calm and confident even in the midst of my enemies. I can say with the three worthies, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 3:18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Daniel 3:17, 28

13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Remember the leaders of early church who have laid down their life for the cause of truth. Consider their example and how God transformed their lives and gave them strength to endure unto the end.

13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Men of old were faithful. Men in more recent times have been faithful. They all believed in the same gospel, the same everlasting covenant. Nay more, they all believed in the “same” Jesus Christ who is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

The message of salvation never changed since Adam and Eve. The same gospel was delivered to Abraham in the covenants. It was the same gospel given to Moses, which for centuries had been acted out in the earthly sanctuary services. The gospel never changed, for it is the everlasting gospel. This everlasting gospel has always pointed to this same Jesus, who has never changed.

13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Therefore, do not be “carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” Ephesians 2:8, 9

“Not with meat,” you cannot be saved by some special diet. There is no salvation by the fork. Does it matter what you eat? Certainly it does. Can you earn salvation by what you eat? Absolutely not!

Consider those who teach salvation by diet, do they not still gossip and commit adultery? Do they not sin like other men except that they have a special diet? Have you found any of them perfect? It is Jesus that makes us perfect through the work of the Holy Spirit. With Jesus in you, you will begin to eat healthfully. But without Him, what you eat may be clean, but what about your heart?

13:10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

As you know, the priests ate certain of the sacrifices brought into the sanctuary. Of course, these priests are no longer worthy to eat of these sacrifices since they have rejected Jesus as the Messiah. So you see, the priests have this special privilege but it does them no good without Jesus.

13:11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

Let us take this one step further. There was a sacrifice that was not eaten by the priests. When the anointed priest or the whole congregation sinned, the blood would be brought into the sanctuary but the body would be taken outside the camp and burned. See Leviticus 6:30

Now consider the high privilege of being a follower of Christ when our Lord instituted the Communion Service. He said, “Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you.” 1 Corinthians 11:24

As the sin offering was taken outside the camp, Jesus “suffered without (or outside) the gate.” The blood of the sin offering was taken into the Holy Place. The blood of Jesus was ministered by Jesus Himself into the Heavenly Sanctuary.

We have the high privilege of partaking of Christ’s life, this is the new covenant; it is the everlasting covenant. At the Communion Service we symbolically take part of the body and blood of Jesus as represented by the bread and wine.

13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Therefore, we are not to be only forgiven by His shed blood but we are also to be “sanctified.” We become sanctified by partaking of His life. Christ’s shed blood can both forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Let all Hebrew Christians therefore come out fully from Judaism. Look to Jesus as your High Priest. You will bear “reproach” from your countrymen, from the Jewish nation. But there is an eternal weight of glory for all who partake fully of Jesus Christ.

13:14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

As partakers of Christ, we have no city in this old world. As we know, Jerusalem is the center of Judaism, but Jerusalem will soon be destroyed. Therefore, we are to look forward to the New Jerusalem that shall never be destroyed.

13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Let us therefore “offer the sacrifice of praise to God” through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no godly fruit for offering animals, but there is much fruit by “giving thanks to His name” with “our lips.”

13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Yet, the Christian life is more than words of praise, as James wrote, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” James 1:27

How do you live such a life? It is not by offering bulls and goats. Rather, it is by eating the life of Christ.

13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

For a church to function well there must be both leaders and followers. However, authority in the church is not to be arbitrary. Consider these words of Paul, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:11-16

The purpose for leadership is to perfect “the saints, for the work of the ministry.” It is not to lord it over others.

Leadership is for the spiritual growth of the church that we all “may grow up into Him in all things.”

When we fail in equipping the saints, it is because we are missing the mark in one or more of these three areas: (1) having the right leaders, (2) having the right structure, and (3) having the right goals. If we do not have the right leaders the whole system is affected negatively. If we do not have the right structure the body is also ill-affected. And if we do not have the high aim or goal of reflecting the image of Jesus perfectly, we are definitely going to miss the mark.

13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Paul asks them to keep praying for him and his fellow servants. They are serving God with a clear conscience. After all, he has received the blood of Jesus Christ which can take away sin.

They are men who desire to do all that God commands, while at the same time realize their dependency upon Divine help.

13:19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Certain circumstances are preventing Paul from seeing his audience face-to-face. But he wants them to pray that they may enjoy that close fellowship again in person.

13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Paul now begins his benediction. He reminds them of the “God of peace,” who will be able to strengthen them in the storm of persecution that is coming. He wants them to remember the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the same power that is available to them to live the life of Christ. He wants them to remember Jesus as the “great shepherd” who will protect His fold at all costs. After all, the Great Shepherd has already shed His blood for them. Remember the everlasting covenant that God made with Adam and Eve, the covenant God confirmed with Abraham and Moses, the covenant that Jesus ratified with His own blood.

13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The God of peace will through the power of Christ’s resurrection “make you perfect in every good work to do His will.” The followers of Christ are able to do “every good work” because they are now born-again. They have been transformed. After all, did not Jesus teach that only a good tree can bear good fruit? They are now good trees with Christ abiding in them. Now they are producing good fruit or good works.

All this “good work” is “wellpleasing” to God because it is made possible with our faith in Christ and “through Jesus Christ.” Praise and glory be to God who makes the new life possible.

13:22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

I beseech you brethren to receive this book of Hebrews. More could have been said, but learn the lessons that are contained therein.

13:23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

We find Paul and Timothy working together in Derbe and Lystra. See Acts 16. At some point Timothy must have been imprisoned. If Timothy comes shortly to Paul, they will go together to meet with them.

13:24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

Greet the leaders of the church who are on the frontlines, and all the saints. The brethren and I here in Italy salute you and will keep you in our prayers.

13:25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

May the grace of God keep you and strengthen you. To God be the glory! Even so, come Lord Jesus.